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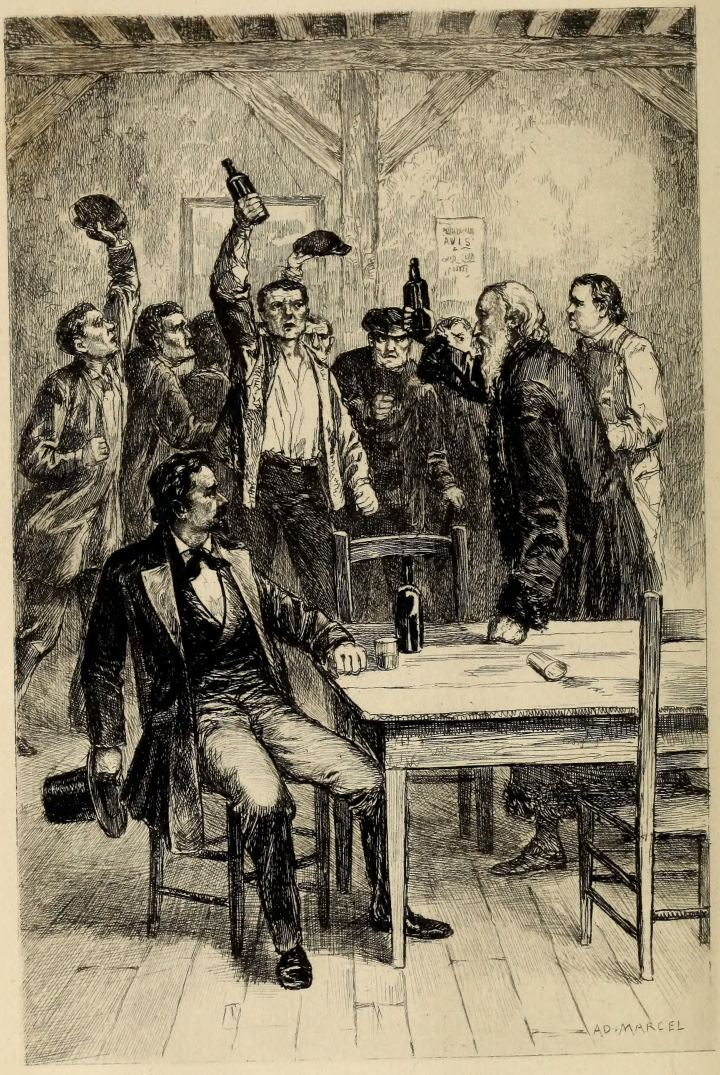
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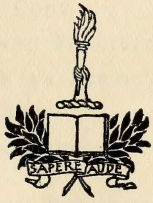
THE WANDERING JEW

By

Eugene Sue

In Three Volumes
Volume II.

Illustrated



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THE QUEEN - BACCHANAL

THE WANDERING JEW.

CHAPTER I.

THE ADIEUX.

The Queen Bacchanal following the waiter, reached the bottom of the staircase.

A hackney-coach was at the door. In this coach she saw Couche-tout-Nud, with one of the men who, two hours before, had been stationed in the Place du Châtelet.

On the arrival of Céphyse the man descended, and said to Jacques, drawing out his watch :

" I give you a quarter of an hour, and that is all I can do for you, my good fellow; after that we must go. Do not attempt to escape, for we shall keep guard at the doors whilst the coach remains here." With one bound Céphyse was in the vehicle.

Too much agitated to speak before, she exclaimed, as she seated herself beside Jacques and saw how ghastly he looked :

" What ails you ? What do they want of you ? "

" They have arrested me for debt," said Jacques, in a hollow voice.

" You ? " cried Céphyse, in an agonised accent.

" Yes, for the bill of guarantee which the agent made

me sign. He said it was but a mere form — the scoundrel!"

"But you have money still in his hands, let him have that on account."

"I have not a sou left, — he sends word by the bailiff that he would not hand me the last thousand francs, as I had not paid the bill of exchange."

"Let us go and entreat him — supplicate him, to set you at liberty! He came to you to offer this money, I know that; because it was to me that he first came. He will surely take pity."

"Pity! What, an agent have pity? You know nothing of those men — "

"Then, there is no hope — none," exclaimed Céphyse, clasping her hands with anguish. Then she added, "But surely he will do something; he promised you — "

"His promises! You see how he fulfils them," said Jacques, with bitterness. "I signed without knowing what I signed; the time for payment is overdue, and it is all regular. It is of no use for me to resist, they have explained all that to me."

"But they cannot detain you long in prison, that's impossible!"

"Five years, if I do not pay; and, as I never can pay, why, my fate is settled."

"Oh, what a misfortune, what a misery, and we can do nothing!" said Céphyse, hiding her head in her hands.

"Listen, Céphyse," replied Jacques, in a voice full of deep emotion. "Since this has befallen me, I have only thought of one thing, — what is to become of you?"

"Oh, do not be uneasy about me!"

"Not be uneasy about you! Why, you are out of your senses. What can you do? The furniture of our two apartments is not worth two hundred francs (8*l.*). We have wasted our money so foolishly that we have not even paid for our lodging — we owe three quarters;

therefore we must not rely on the sale of the furniture. I leave you without a sou. As for me, they must at least feed me in the prison, — but how are you to live?"

"Why annoy yourself about that in anticipation?"

"I want to know how you are to live over to-morrow," said Jacques.

"I will sell my dress, some small things I have, and send you half the money. I will keep the rest, which will last me several days."

"And then, afterwards?"

"Afterwards — why, then I don't know what I shall do — what can I say? — afterwards we shall see."

"Listen, Céphyse," resumed Jacques, with bitter emotion; "now I feel how much I love you — my heart seems as if it were squeezed in a vice, when I think of quitting you — I am in an agony to think what will become of you!" Then, passing his hand over his forehead, Jacques added: "You see now what has undone us, — ever saying always, 'Oh, to-morrow will never come!' yet, you see it does come. Now that I shall not be near you, and that you will have expended the last farthing of the things you are going to sell — unable to work as you are — what will you do? Shall I tell you what you will do? You will forget me, and —"

Then, as if he recoiled from his own thoughts, Jacques cried, with rage and despair:

"*Misère de Dieu!* if that happened to me, I would dash out my brains on the paving-stones!"

Céphyse guessed the thoughts of Jacques, and, throwing her arms around his neck, said, touchingly:

"I? another lover? Never! For, like yourself, I feel now how entirely I love you."

"But to exist, my poor Céphyse, — to exist?"

"Well, I shall take courage, and go and live with my sister, as I did before. I will work with her, and that will always give me bread. I shall only go out to see you. In a few days, perhaps, the agent, on reflection, will think

that you cannot pay him the ten thousand francs, and he will set you at liberty. I shall have resumed the habit of labour, — you'll see, you'll see! You will also return to work. We shall live poor, but quiet; and, after all, we shall have had a great deal of amusement for six months, whilst how many are there who in all their lives have never known pleasure! Believe what I say, my dear Jacques, for it is true. I shall profit by this lesson; so, if you love me, do not be in the least uneasy. I tell you this, I would rather die a hundred times than have another lover!"

"Embrace me," said Jacques, with tears in his eyes. "I believe you — I believe you. You know my courage now; and for the future — you are right — we must try and return to work; if not, the bushel of charcoal, like father Arsène! For," added Jacques, in a low and tremulous voice, "for six months I was as it were always intoxicated; now I have suddenly become sobered, and I see whither we were hurrying. Once at the end of our resources, I might have turned thief, and you — "

"Oh, Jacques, you frighten me! Do not say that!" exclaimed Céphyse, interrupting Couche-tout-Nud. "I swear to you that I will return to my sister; I will work and shall bear up my courage."

The Queen-Bacchanal at this moment was quite sincere; she was anxious to keep her word resolutely. Her heart was not, as yet, wholly perverted; misery and need had been to her, as they have been for so many others, the cause and even the excuse of her going astray; and up to this time she had at least followed the inclination of her heart, without any base and venal considerations. The cruel position in which she saw Jacques placed increased her love, and she believed that she was quite sure of herself when she swore to him that she would return to La Mayeux and resume her life of barren and incessant labour, — that life of painful dep-

rivation which she had been unable to support before, and which must of necessity be still more painful to return to, as she had since led a life of idleness and dissipation. But the assurances which she gave Jacques somewhat calmed the distress and disquietude which he experienced. He had sufficient good sense and good feeling to perceive the headlong and fatal course he had been pursuing, and which was blindly leading himself and Céphyse in the high and rapid road to infamy.

One of the bailiffs, having rapped at the door, said to Jacques:

"My fine fellow, make haste, — you have only five minutes more!"

"Well, then, my dear girl, courage!" said Jacques.

"Make yourself easy, — I will have courage, rely on it!"

"You will not return up-stairs?"

"Oh, no," said Céphyse, "I have a horror of this fête now!"

"I paid for all in advance, and I will desire the waiter to inform them that they need not expect us again," added Jacques. "They will be somewhat astonished, but that is of no consequence."

"If you could only go to our lodgings with me," said Céphyse; "and perhaps this man will let you, for you cannot go to Ste. Pélagie dressed in this way."

"That's true, and he will not refuse to let you accompany me; but, as he will be with us in the coach, we cannot say anything before him; so let me, for the first time in my life, talk sense. Recollect well, my Céphyse, what I say to you, and it is as suitable to myself as to yourself," said Jacques, in a serious and earnest tone, "begin this very day your habits of industry. It will be painful, difficult; no matter, do not hesitate, or you will soon begin this lesson; or, as you say yourself, later it will not be time; and then you will end like so many other unfortunate — You understand me?"

"I do," said Céphyse, blushing; "but I would a hundred times prefer death to such a life."

"And you are right; for in this case," added Jacques, in a low and concentrated voice, "I would aid you to die."

"I rely on you, Jacques," replied Céphyse, embracing her lover with fervour, and then adding, sorrowfully, "I believe it was a presentiment when, just now, I felt myself suddenly melancholy, without knowing why, in the midst of our mirth, and drank to the cholera, and that it would kill us together."

"Well, who knows that it will not come, — the cholera?" replied Jacques, with a saddened air; "that will save the charcoal, and perhaps we should not have money left to buy it!"

"I can only say one thing, Jacques; and that is, you will always find me ready to live and die with you!"

"Come, come, dry your eyes," he muttered, with deep emotion; "do not let us play the fool before these men!"

A few minutes afterwards the coach moved on towards Jacques's lodgings, where he was to change his clothes before he went to prison for debt.

Let us repeat, apropos of the sister of La Mayeux (it is a subject which we cannot too often repeat), one of the most injurious consequences of the want of organisation in labour is the insufficiency of wages.

The insufficiency of wages inevitably forces the greater number of young girls, thus badly remunerated, to seek for a means of existence by forming depraved connections.

Sometimes they receive a moderate sum from their lover, which, joined to the produce of their own labour, helps them to a livelihood; sometimes, like the sister of La Mayeux, they completely abandon labour, and live with the man they select, when he is able to support

both ; then, during this time of pleasure and entire cessation from labour, the incurable leprosy of idleness for ever takes hold of these unhappy creatures.

This is the first phase of degradation in which the culpable carelessness of society involves an immense number of females of the working classes, born with the instincts of modesty, propriety, and good conduct.

At the end of a certain time, these lovers grow tired, and forsake them, and perhaps when they have become mothers.

Occasionally a wild prodigality conducts some inconsiderate wretch to prison ; and then the young girl is alone, abandoned, and without means of existence.

Those who have preserved their courage and good feeling return to labour ; but their number is very few. Others, impelled by misery or the habits of an idle and easy life, then fall into the lowest depths of degradation.

They ought to be more pitied than blamed for this degradation, for the first and virtual cause of their fall was the insufficient amount of their pay or failure of employ.[1]

Another deplorable circumstance of the want of organisation of labour is for men, besides the insufficiency of wages, the deep disgust with which they fulfil the task imposed upon them.

That may be conceived.

Is there any attempt to make work agreeable, either by its variety, or honourable recompense, or kindness, or a remuneration proportionate to the results of their handicraft, or by the hope of an annuity assured to them after long years of labour ?

[1] We read in an excellent pamphlet, filled with practical views and dictated by a charitable and elevated mind (National League against the Misery of Work-people ; or, a Memorandum explanatory of a Petition to be presented to the Chamber of Deputies, by J. Terson, — Paulin Editeur), these lines, unfortunately but too true : " We do not speak of workwomen placed in the same alternative, — what we should have to say would be too painful ; we only assert that it is during the periods when work ceases for the longest time that the emissaries of prostitution recruit their proselytes from among the handsomest females in the humbler classes."

No; the country neither knows nor cares for their wants or their rights.

And yet, to refer to one branch of trade: the mechanics and workmen in factories, who, exposed to the explosion of steam and contact with innumerable wheels, every day run greater dangers than soldiers incur in a war, display a great deal of practical skill, render to their business, and, consequently, the country, undeniable services, during a long and honourable career, unless they are killed by the bursting of a boiler or have some limb maimed by the iron teeth of a machine.

In this latter case does the workman receive a reward equal to that of the soldier as the price of this courage, laudable but unproductive, — a berth in a house for invalids?

No.

What is it to his country? And, if the master of the workman is ungrateful, the maimed man, incapable of service, dies of hunger in some hole or corner.

In these pompous fêtes of industry, do they ever call for any of those skilful workmen who alone have produced those splendid tissues and stuffs, have forged and damasked those brilliant weapons, chiselled those cups of gold or silver, engraved those pieces of ebony or ivory, mounted those brilliant stones with such exquisite art?

No.

Obscured in the depths of the garret, in the midst of a miserable and famished family, they hardly exist on a miserable salary, — those very individuals who, it will be confessed, have contributed at least half to enrich the country with those marvels which make its wealth, its boast, and its pride.

A minister of commerce, who had the least comprehension of his high functions and his duties, should demand that each production exhibited should be represented by a certain number of the most meritorious candidates, among whom the producer should point out

the person who seemed to him most worthy to represent the working class in those grand industrial solemnities.

Would it not be a noble and encouraging example to see the master propose for rewards or public distinctions the workman deputed by his fellows as one of the most honest, hard working, and intelligent in his profession?

Then a fearful injustice would disappear; then the virtues of the workman would be stimulated by a generous and lofty aim; then he would have an interest in being well conducted.

No doubt the producer, by reason of the intelligence which he displays, the capital he ventures, the establishment he founds, and the good which he sometimes effects, has a legitimate right to the distinctions with which he is honoured; but wherefore is the workman so pitilessly excluded from those rewards whose operation on the masses is so powerful?

Are generals and officers the only individuals who are rewarded in our army?

After having justly remunerated the chiefs of this powerful and productive array of industry, why are not its soldiers thought of?

Why is there never exhibited the sign of a brilliant reward for them, — some consoling and kind word from an august lip? Why do we see in France not one workman decorated, as the reward of his skill, his industrial courage, his long and laborious career? The cross, and the modest pension which accompanies it, would have for him a double and justly merited recompense. But no; for the humble toil, the toil that really produces, there is but forgetfulness, injustice, indifference, and disdain.

And this public neglect, often aggravated by the selfishness and severity of the ungrateful employer, produces the deplorable state of the workmen.

Some, in spite of incessant labour, live on in privation and die prematurely, cursing the society which forsakes

them. Others seek a temporary oblivion of their woes in excessive and ruinous intoxication.

A great number, having no interest, no advantage, no moral or material motive for doing more or better, confine themselves to doing just so much and no more than will gain their pay. Nothing attaches them to their toil, because, in their eyes, nothing elevates, honours, or glorifies their exertions — nothing protects them from the temptation of indolence, and if by chance they find the means of living occasionally in idleness, by degrees they yield to the habits of indolence and debauchery; and sometimes the worst passions gain supreme control over dispositions originally well disposed, honourable, and ductile, for want of some just and protecting superintendence, which should have sustained, encouraged, and recompensed their early, honest, and laborious inclinations.

We will now follow La Mayeux, who, after having gone to seek for work from the person who usually employed her, went to the Rue de Babylone, to the pavilion occupied by Adrienne de Cardoville.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHARITY OF STE. MARIE. — FLORINE.

WHILST the Queen-Bacchanal and Couche-tout-Nud terminated the most joyous period of their existence so sorrowfully, La Mayeux reached the door of the pavilion in the Rue de Babylone.

Before she rang, the young work-girl wiped her eyes, — a fresh trouble had befallen her. On leaving the tavern she had gone to the person who usually employed her; but she refused her, being able, as she told her, to get her work made up in the prisons where women were confined at a saving of a third of the expense. La Mayeux, rather than lose this last resource, offered to submit to this diminution; but the pieces of linen had been already given out, and the young workwoman could not hope for employment before at least a fortnight, even though she had assented to this reduction of pay. We may imagine the poor creature's anguish, for, when a compulsory cessation of work comes, there is only left the choice of begging, dying of hunger, or robbing.

Her visit to the pavilion in the Rue de Babylone will be explained as we proceed.

La Mayeux rang timidly at the small gate, and a few moments afterwards Florine opened the door.

The waiting-maid was no longer attired according to the charming taste of Adrienne, but, on the contrary, was dressed with an affectation of austere simplicity, She wore a high gown of dark colour, sufficiently full

to conceal the graceful elegance of her form, her bandeaux of jet black hair were hardly visible under the flat border of a small white and stiffly starched cap, resembling that worn by nuns; but, in spite of this plain costume, the brown and pale countenance of Florine still looked extremely handsome.

We have already said that Florine, placed by a criminal act to absolute dependence on Rodin and M. d'Aigrigny, had up to this time served as a spy on Adrienne, in spite of the marks of confidence and kindness with which her young mistress treated her. Florine was not utterly perverted, and consequently often experienced painful, but vain feelings of remorse, when she reflected upon the shameful system on which she was acting towards Adrienne de Cardoville.

At the sight of La Mayeux, whom she recognised, Florine, who had told her the night before of Agricola's arrest, and the sudden fit of madness which had come over Mlle. de Cardoville, receded a step, so much was she struck with interest and pity on seeing the countenance of the poor work-girl. The information of the forced cessation of work, in the midst of such painful circumstances, was a terrible blow for the poor needlewoman; the traces of recent tears left their furrows in her cheeks, her features expressed unwittingly a deep anguish, and she appeared so exhausted, so weak, so overcome, that Florine went up to her hastily, offered her arm, and said to her, kindly, whilst she was supporting her:

"Come in, mademoiselle, come in. Rest yourself for awhile, for you are very pale, and appear to be suffering greatly from fatigue."

Saying this, Florine led La Mayeux into a small room with a fireplace, and seated her before a blazing fire in a carpeted chair.

Georgette and Hebe had been dismissed, and Florine alone was left in charge of the pavilion.

When La Mayeux was seated, Florine said to her, with interest:

"Mademoiselle, may I offer you anything, — a little sugared water, warm, with some orange-flower water in it?"

"Thank you very much, mademoiselle," said La Mayeux, with emotion; for the least token of kindness filled her with gratitude, and she saw with some surprise that her poor garments did not occasion either constraint or disgust in Florine.

"I only want a little rest, for I have walked a long way," she replied, "if you will allow me?"

"Rest as long as you please, mademoiselle; I am alone in the pavilion since the departure of my poor mistress." (Here Florine blushed and sighed.) "So do not hurry yourself at all, but come near the fire, I beg of you. Stay — place yourself there, you will be warmer. Dear me, how wet your feet are! Put them on this stool."

The kind reception of Florine, her handsome face, and her complaisant manner, which were not those of an ordinary waiting-maid, struck La Mayeux greatly, who was more sensible than any one else, in spite of her humble station, of all that was kind, gracious, delicate, and *distingué;* and, yielding to this attraction, the young work-girl, usually so retiring, sensitive, and timid, felt herself almost inclined to treat Florine with confidence.

"How very kind you are, mademoiselle," she said, in a tone of gratitude. "I am quite ashamed of your kind attentions to me!"

"I assure you, mademoiselle, I should be delighted to do more than mere words, and offering you a place by the fire, — you are so gentle, and interest me so much."

"Ah, mademoiselle, how nice it is to warm oneself at a good fire!" said La Mayeux, in the simplicity of her heart. Then, fearing (such was her delicacy) that she

should be thought guilty of an abuse of hospitality in lengthening her visit, she added:

"I will tell you, mademoiselle, why I return here: yesterday you told me that a young smith, M. Agricola Baudoin, had been arrested in this pavilion."

"Alas, mademoiselle, yes; and at the very moment, too, when my poor mistress was about to give him the assistance he required!"

"M. Agricola — I am his adopted sister," resumed La Mayeux, slightly blushing — "wrote to me last night from his prison, and begged me to tell his father to come here as quickly as he could, and inform Mlle. de Cardoville that he, Agricola, had some very important particulars to communicate to the young lady, or to such person as she might please to send; but that he did not dare to trust them in a letter, not knowing if the correspondence of the prisoners was read by the director of the prison."

"What! And M. Agricola wished to make an important disclosure to my mistress?" said Florine, much surprised.

"Yes, mademoiselle; for up to this time Agricola is ignorant of the frightful malady of Mlle. de Cardoville."

"True; and this attack of insanity came on so suddenly," said Florine, lowering her eyes, "that it was impossible to have anticipated it."

"It must have been so, indeed," said La Mayeux; "for, when Agricola saw Mlle. de Cardoville for the first time, he returned struck with her grace, kindness, and delicacy."

"Like everybody else who approached my mistress," said Florine, sorrowfully.

"This morning," resumed La Mayeux, "after having had the letter of Agricola, I went to his father. He had already left home, for he is full of the deepest anxiety; but the letter of my adopted brother appeared to me so pressing, and of such vast importance to Mlle. de Cardo-

ville, who had acted so generously towards him, that I came myself."

"Unfortunately, my young lady is no longer here, as you know."

"But are there none of her family, to whom, if I cannot speak, I can at least make known through you, mademoiselle, that Agricola is anxious to communicate something of the utmost importance to this young lady?"

"It is strange!" replied Florine, reflecting, and without making any answer to La Mayeux; and then, turning towards her, she said:

"And you are completely ignorant of the subject of this disclosure?"

"Perfectly, mademoiselle; but I know Agricola, and he is honour and honesty itself; he has a mind just and upright, and he might be believed in all and anything he said. Besides, what interest can he have in —"

"Heavens!" exclaimed Florine, hastily, as if struck by a sudden light, and interrupting La Mayeux, "I remember now: when he was apprehended in a concealed place, in which mademoiselle had had him placed, I chanced to be present, and M. Agricola said to me, in a quick and low voice:

"'Pray say to your generous mistress that her kindness to me will have its reward, and my concealment in this secret closet may perhaps not have been without its utility.'

"That was all he could say, for they took him off instantly. I confess that in these words I had but remarked the expression of his gratitude, and the hope of proving it one day to mademoiselle; but when I unite those words to the letter which he has written to you," said Florine, in a reflecting tone —

"Why, then," interposed La Mayeux, "there is certainly some connection between his concealment in the secret closet and the important revelations which he desires to make to your lady or some one of her family."

"The secret place had not been inhabited or entered for a long time," said Florine, with a thoughtful air; "perhaps M. Agricola found or saw something there which might be of importance to my young lady."

"If Agricola's letter had not seemed to me so pressing," said La Mayeux, "I should not have come, and he would have presented himself here on quitting his prison, which now, thanks to the generosity of one of his old companions, will not be long; but not knowing if, even after the caution is deposited, they would set him at liberty to-day, I was very anxious to fulfil his request, as far as was in my power. The generous kindness of your mistress made it a duty in me to do so."

Like all persons in whom good instincts develop themselves at times, Florine experienced a sort of consolation in doing good, when she could do so with impunity, that is to say, without exposing herself to the inexorable resentment of those on whom she depended.

Thanks to La Mayeux, an occasion offered on which she might probably render her mistress an important service; and, knowing sufficient of the hatred of the Princesse de Saint-Dizier for her niece to be certain of the danger which Agricola's disclosure might produce, important as it was, if made to any one but Mlle. de Cardoville herself, Florine said to La Mayeux, in a serious and emphatic tone:

"Listen, mademoiselle, whilst I give you what I believe to be most serviceable advice, with respect to my poor lady; but this step, on my part, may have very serious consequences for me, if you do not attend to my recommendation."

"How, mademoiselle?" said La Mayeux, looking at Florine with extreme surprise.

"Looking to my mistress's interest, M. Agricola ought not to tell any one but herself the important matters which he is desirous of communicating."

"But, unable to see Mlle. Adrienne, why should he not address himself to her family?"

"Above all things, he must be silent to my mistress's family on the subject. Mlle. Adrienne may recover, and then M. Agricola can speak to herself; and, if she never gets better, tell your adopted brother that it is still better that he should preserve the secret than see it serve the enemies of my young lady, which, be assured, would most certainly happen."

"I understand you, mademoiselle," said La Mayeux, sorrowfully; "the family of your generous mistress do not love her — persecute her, perhaps?"

"I cannot answer you a word on that subject; but now, as far as I am concerned, I entreat you to promise me that you will exact from M. Agricola that he will not say one word to any person of the step you have taken in coming to me on this subject, and the advice I have given you; the happiness — no not the happiness," said Florine, with bitterness, as if she had long since renounced all hope of being happy — "not the happiness, but the repose of my life depends on your discretion!"

"Oh, make yourself perfectly easy," said La Mayeux, as much affected as astonished at the painful expression of Florine's features, "I will never be ungrateful; no one but Agricola shall ever know that I have seen you."

"Thanks, oh, thanks, mademoiselle!" said Florine, with warmth.

"You thank me?" said La Mayeux, astonished at seeing the big tears coursing down Florine's face.

"Yes, I owe you a moment of happiness, pure and unmixed; for, perhaps, I may render my dear mistress a service without the risk of increasing the troubles which already overwhelm me!"

"You unhappy?"

"Does that surprise you? Oh, believe me, whatever

may be your destiny, I would exchange it with mine!" exclaimed Florine, almost involuntarily.

"Alas, mademoiselle," said La Mayeux, "you appear to have too kind a heart for me to allow you to form such a wish, particularly to-day —"

"What do you mean?"

"Ah, I sincerely hope, for your sake, mademoiselle," replied La Mayeux, with bitterness, "that you may never know how frightful it is to see yourself deprived of work, when work is your only resource!"

"And are you reduced to that?" exclaimed Florine, looking anxiously at La Mayeux.

The young work-girl bowed down her head and made no reply. Her extreme pride almost reproached her for this confidence, which seemed like a complaint, and which had escaped her when thinking of the horror of her position.

"If this be so," said Florine, "I pity you from the bottom of my heart; and yet I do not know if my misfortune is not still greater than yours." Then, after a moment's reflection, Florine suddenly exclaimed, "But, now I think of it, you want work; if you are at your wits' end, I think I can procure you work."

"Is it possible, mademoiselle?" exclaimed La Mayeux. "I never should have dared to ask you for such a service, which could, however, save me; but now your generous offer almost commands my full confidence, and I will confess to you that this very morning they have taken from me my very humble work, though it only brought me in four francs a week."

"Four francs a week!" cried Florine, who could scarcely credit what she heard.

"It is certainly very little," said La Mayeux; "but it was enough for me. Unfortunately, the person who employed me found a way to have the work done for a still less price."

"Four francs a week!" repeated Florine, deeply moved

at so much misery and so much resignation. "Well, well, I will introduce you to some persons who will assure you the earning of at least two francs a day."

"Is it possible I could earn two francs a day?"

"You could indeed, — only you would be obliged to go and work by the day, unless, indeed, you preferred living entirely in the house."

"In my situation," said La Mayeux, with a timid pride, "I know one has no right to be guided by what we like or dislike; still, I should greatly prefer working by the day, even though I gained less, if I might be allowed to take the work home with me."

"Unfortunately," answered Florine, "the performing your work at the place itself is indispensable."

"Then," replied La Mayeux, timidly, "I must abandon the idea of profiting by your goodness. Not that I refuse to work daily at the house of my employer, for one must live; but workwomen are expected to be dressed creditably, if not smartly; and I confess to you without any shame — for mine is an honest poverty — that it is entirely out of my power to be at all better dressed than I am at present."

"Do not let that be any objection," cried Florine, eagerly; "means will be found to provide you with suitable attire."

La Mayeux regarded Florine with increasing surprise. Such offers were so entirely above her utmost hopes, and the pay proposed so greatly exceeding the earnings of any needlewoman she had ever heard of, that she could scarcely credit her senses.

"But," replied she, after some hesitation, "may I venture to ask how I can ever have deserved such generosity? What motive can any one have for bestowing such favours on a poor girl like me?"

Florine started suddenly. The impulse of a naturally good and feeling heart, conjoined with a sincere desire to serve La Mayeux, whose gentleness and resignation

to her hard lot deeply affected Florine, had led her on to make a somewhat thoughtless proposal. She well knew the price the poor La Mayeux must pay for the services so freely promised her; and now, for the first time, she asked herself whether it was probable the young sempstress would accept them upon the terms which would be affixed to them. Unfortunately, Florine had gone too far to recede; yet she could not bring herself to confess to La Mayeux all that yet remained to be told touching this tempting offer. She, therefore, determined to leave its further development to others, and to permit the scruples of La Mayeux to interfere or not, as it might happen, with her undertaking the conditions imposed, believing, like many who have yielded to temptation, that others might be as vulnerable as herself. Florine could not help fancying that, in La Mayeux's distressed situation, it was more than possible neither her delicacy nor scruples would stand in the way of her acceding to all required of her. She therefore resumed: "I can well understand your being surprised at offers of pay so much beyond what you have hitherto gained; but I ought to explain to you that what I have been saying refers to a charitable institution, established for the purpose of finding work or occupation for deserving though distressed females, and undertakes to place them, either as servants in families, or to supply them with daily needlework at the institution, which is called Ste. Marie's Charity. Now this charity is conducted by persons so truly benevolent that they even provide a sort of outfit for the females they take under their protection, when it happens that they themselves do not possess the means of appearing respectable at their work, or taking a suitable supply of clothes with them when they enter a service."

This plausible explanation of the very magnificent offers Florine had made abundantly satisfied La Mayeux, who, indeed, saw nothing uncommon in a species of

benevolent charity her own gentle mind fully responded to.

"Ah, now, indeed, I can quite comprehend why these kind persons give so high a price as that you were speaking of!" cried La Mayeux; "there is one difficulty, I fear, in the way of obtaining the kind assistance of these charitable individuals, and that is, my being wholly unprovided with any recommendations to their notice or patronage."

"Nay," said Florine, "your being honest, industrious, and distressed, will be all the recommendations you will require. There is only one thing I must prepare you for; you will be questioned as to the strictness with which you perform all your religious duties."

"Ah, mademoiselle, no one in the world loves or worships God more truly than myself," replied La Mayeux, with gentle firmness; "but the practice of certain religious duties is a matter of conscience; and, though I should deeply regret losing the opportunity you have held out to me, yet I certainly could not avail myself of it, if anything of this kind were required."

"Not the slightest, I assure you; but, as the charity in question is directed by extremely pious persons, I only meant to say, you must not feel astonished at their questioning you on this head, — besides, try it. You need only try, you can incur no risk. If the conditions they propose to you suit, you can accept them; if, on the contrary, they offend your liberty of conscience, why, it will be at your pleasure to refuse them. Your position cannot be rendered worse by having an opportunity of judging, and it may be made much better."

It was impossible to make any objection to reasoning so clear and convincing, and, with the consciousness of having full powers to choose or reject, La Mayeux dismissed all mistrust and doubt; she therefore added:

"Indeed, mademoiselle, I most gratefully accept your

offer, and thank you for it from the bottom of my heart. But who will introduce me?"

"I will. To-morrow, if you like."

"But then, these charitable persons will, I suppose, wish to make some inquiries respecting me?"

"I think not. The holy mother Sainte-Perpétue, superior of the convent of Ste. Marie, where the charity is established, will, in all probability, be satisfied with seeing you and hearing your own account of the difficulty you are placed in, and will not wish for any further recommendation; but, even if otherwise, she will but have to say so, and you can very easily satisfy her. So now, then, it is agreed, is it not? To-morrow, then."

"Shall I call here for you, mademoiselle?"

"No; because, as I told you, we must not let any one know of your having been here from M. Agricola; and, were you to repeat your visit, it would excite suspicion, and, perhaps, bring the whole affair to light. I will come with a coach and fetch you. Where do you live?"

"In the Rue Brise-Miche, No. 13; and, since you are kind enough to take so much trouble, mademoiselle, all you need do on arriving will be to ask the dyer, who acts as porter to the house, to come and call me, to let La Mayeux know you are there."

"La Mayeux!" exclaimed Florine, with unfeigned surprise.

"Yes, mademoiselle," said the poor girl, with a mournful smile, "that is a nickname everybody calls me by; and it was because of my unfortunate figure and infirmity," continued La Mayeux, unable to prevent a large tear trickling slowly down her pale cheek, "which obtained for me this name, that I wished to avoid doing my work anywhere but at home. There are many who can bear to joke at such things as bodily deformity, without recollecting how cruelly it wounds the object of their mirth; but," added La Mayeux, wiping away the tears with which her eyes were filled, with her long thin fin-

gers, "it is not for me to choose what I will do; and, therefore, I submit."

Deeply affected at this unpretending forgetfulness of self and unfeigned humility, Florine took La Mayeux's hand, saying:

"Do not distress yourself by thinking of such things; there are some misfortunes far more calculated to inspire compassion and tenderness than derision. Then you do not wish me to ask for you by your real name?"

"Oh, yes, if you please. I am called Madeleine Soliveau; but I must again remind you, mademoiselle, that I am but very little known by any other name than La Mayeux."

"Well, then, to-morrow, about twelve o'clock, I will be in the Rue Brise-Miche."

"Oh, mademoiselle, how can I ever repay your kindness?"

"Do not mention repaying me. Be assured my greatest desire is, that what I am proposing may prove serviceable to you, of which you alone can judge after to-morrow's interview. As for M. Agricola, do not reply to his letter; but wait till he gets out of prison; and then, let me repeat, tell him he must on no account divulge one syllable of what he knows until he can see my dear mistress."

"Where is this poor young lady at present?"

"I do not know. I am ignorant where she was taken to when her madness first declared itself. Then expect me to-morrow without fail."

"Thank you a thousand times," said La Mayeux.

The reader has not forgotten, in all probability, that the convent of Ste. Marie, whither Florine had promised to conduct La Mayeux, was also the spot where the daughters of General Simon were confined, and closely adjoined the madhouse of Doctor Baleinier, to which Adrienne de Cardoville had been taken, and was then kept prisoner.

CHAPTER III.

THE ABBESS SAINTE-PERPÉTUE.

The convent of Ste. Marie, whither the daughters of Marshal Simon had been conducted, was an ancient and vast hôtel, the extensive gardens of which abutted on the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, at this time one of the most deserted parts of Paris.

The scenes which now follow took place on the twelfth of February, the eve of the fatal day on which the members of the Rennepont family, the last descendants of the sister of the Wandering Jew, were to assemble in the Rue St. François.

The convent of Ste. Marie was governed with the strictest regularity. A superior council, composed of influential ecclesiastics, presided over by the Father d'Aigrigny, and females of deep piety, at the head of which was the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, frequently assembled for the purpose of consulting as to the best means of extending and confirming the occult and vast influence of this establishment, which was making remarkable advances.

Skilful combination, very sagaciously planned, had presided over the institution of the Charity of Ste. Marie, which, aided by numerous donations, possessed very large estates, and other riches, which were daily accumulating.

The religious community was but a pretext; but, thanks to numberless ramifications with the provinces, and the intervention of the highest members of the ultra-

montane party, a considerable number of richly endowed orphans were sent to this establishment, who were there to receive a solid, serious, pious education; much preferable, as they asserted, to the frivolous bringing up which they would have in fashionable boarding-schools infected with the corruptions of the age. To widows and lone females, who were wealthy, the Charity of Ste. Marie offered a secure asylum against the dangers and temptations of the world. In this peaceable retreat they would enjoy a heavenly calm, and, whilst they consulted their eternal salvation, they were surrounded by the tenderest and most affectionate care.

This was not all; the Mother Sainte-Perpétue, the superior of the convent, undertook also in the name of the charity to procure for the truly faithful, who were desirous of preserving the interior of their houses from the corruptions of the age, either companions for solitary or aged females, or servants for households, or workwomen by the day, all being persons whose pious morality was guaranteed by the charity.

Nothing could appear more worthy of interest, sympathy, and encouragement than such an establishment; but we shall anon unveil the capacious and dangerous net of intrigues of all sorts that covered these charitable and holy appearances.

The superior of the convent, Mother Sainte-Perpétue, was a tall woman, about forty years of age, dressed in a woollen gown of carmelite colour, and having a long rosary at her girdle; a white cap, tied under the chin, and a black veil, confined her lean and pale countenance; a vast quantity of deep and intersecting wrinkles furrowed her forehead, of the colour of yellow ivory; her sharp and projecting nose was curved slightly like the beak of a bird of prey; her black eye, sagacious and piercing, combined to complete a physiognomy intelligent, calm, and firm.

As regarded her ability and management of the tangi-

ble interests of the community, Mother Sainte-Pérpetue was equal to the most skilful and wily lawyer. When women are gifted with what is called a mind for business, and will apply their depth of penetration, indefatigable perseverance, prudent dissimulation, and, above all, that correctness and quickness of perception so natural to them, they attain prodigious results.

As to Mother Sainte-Perpétue, to her strong and powerful brain the vast responsibility of the community was but child's play. No one knew better than she how to purchase depreciated properties, restore them to their worth, and sell them again advantageously. The variations of the funds, exchange, the current value of shares in different undertakings, were perfectly familiar to her. She had never instructed her agents to meddle in a doubtful affair, when investment was required for the sums which pious souls daily bestowed in alms on the Charity of Ste. Marie. She had established in the house order, discipline, and, above all, an extreme economy; the constant end and aim of her efforts being to enrich, not herself, but the community which she ruled; for the spirit of association, when directed to the purposes of collective egotism, gives to bodies the faults and vices of an individual.

Thus a body will love power and money, as an ambitious man loves power for the sake of power, as the avaricious man loves money for the sake of money. But it is always on the subject of real property that congregations act like individuals. Real property is their dream, their fixed idea, their fructifying monomania, and they pursue their object with most earnest, tender, and indefatigable zeal.

The first acquisition of real property is to a poor and small rising community what her wedding presents are to a young bride, his first horse to a young man, his first success to a poet, her first cashmere shawl to a dressmaker's girl. And, after all, in this material age,

a fixed piece of property makes a community known and appreciated as substantial to a certain extent in the religious Exchange, and gives it the more influence over the simple-minded, inasmuch as all these associations for assumed charitable purposes, which end by acquiring immense possessions, commence invariably with an air of modest poverty as its social introduction, and charity to its neighbour as its guarantee and ostensible object.

Thus it is hardly to be credited how much fierce and bitter rivalry there arises between different congregations of men and women, on the subject of the actual property which each can acquire, and with what ineffable complacency an opulent congregation will crush, under the inventory of its own houses, farms, investments, a poorer congregation.

Envy, jealous hatred, rendered still more fierce by the indolence of the cloister, produce these comparisons; and yet nothing can be less Christian, in the heavenly acceptation of this divine word, nothing can be less in unison with the real spirit of the Gospel, a spirit so essentially and religiously inculcating community, than this violent and insatiable ardour for acquiring and monopolising by every possible mode, — a dangerous passion, and far from excusable in the eyes of public opinion, through the miserable almsgiving, which is presided over by an inexorable spirit of exclusion and intolerance.

Mother Sainte-Perpétue was seated before a large bureau, with falling flap, placed in the centre of a small apartment, plainly, but very comfortably furnished. An excellent fire burnt in the marble-fronted fireplace, and a soft carpet covered the floor.

The superior, who every day had brought to her all letters, addressed either to the sisters or the boarders of the convent, was occupied in opening the letters of the sisters, according to right, and in unsealing very skil-

fully the letters of the boarders, according to a right which she assumed to herself, and without their privity, but, be it understood, always for the sole benefit of the dear girls' salvation, and a little that she might be always well informed of their correspondence, for the superior took upon herself also the duty of taking cognisance of all the letters, which were written from the convent, before they were despatched to the post-office.

The traces of this pious and innocent investigation easily disappeared, for the holy and good mother possessed a complete arsenal of charming little steel tools, some of which, very pointed, served to cut imperceptibly the paper around the seal, and then the letter opened. Read and replaced in its envelope, she took another pretty little rounded tool, which, being lightly warmed, was quickly applied about the circumference of the wax of the seal, and which thereby slowly melted, expanded a little, and covered the first incision. Then, by a sentiment of justice and benevolence highly praiseworthy, there was in the arsenal of the good mother a small and most ingenious fumigatory, to the moist and dissolving vapour of which were submitted the letters modestly and humbly closed with wafers, which, thus moistened, yielded to the slightest effort, and without the smallest tear.

According to the importance of the indiscretions in which the writers of these letters were occasionally detected, the superior made notes, more or less special. She was at this moment in her interesting investigation, when two knocks gently rapped on her bolted door.

Mother Sainte-Perpétue instantly lowered the large semicircular flap of her escritoire, and covered her arsenal, and, rising, opened the door with a grave and solemn air.

A lay sister came in and announced that the Princesse de Saint-Dizier was waiting in the salon, and that Mlle. Florine, accompanied by a young deformed and ill-clad

girl, had arrived a short time after the princess, and was waiting at the door of the little corridor.

"Introduce the princess first," said Mother Sainte-Perpétue, and with delightful care she moved an arm-chair towards the fire.

Madame de Saint-Dizier entered.

Although free from coquettish or juvenile pretensions, the princess was dressed with taste and elegance. She wore a black velvet hat of fashionable make, a large blue cashmere shawl, a black satin gown, trimmed with sable, and a muff of the same fur.

"To what good fortune am I, to-day, to attribute the honour of your visit, my dear daughter?" said the superior, graciously.

"On a most important matter, my dear mother; and I am in great haste, for his eminence is waiting for me, and unfortunately I have but a few minutes to spare. My business concerns the two orphan girls, about whom we had so long a conversation yesterday."

"They are still separated, as you desired; and the separation has affected them so much that this morning I have been obliged to send for Doctor Baleinier at his *Maison de Santé*. He found them suffering from fever and extreme depression; and, remarkable to say, the same symptoms precisely developed themselves at the same time in both sisters. I have again questioned the two unhappy creatures, and I have been amazed, thunderstruck. They are idolaters!"

"The greater the necessity of entrusting them to you. But to the subject of my visit, my dear mother. We have learned the unexpected return of the soldier who brought these young girls into France, and whom we believed absent for several days. He is, however, in Paris, and, in spite of his age, is a bold and daring man, with uncommon energy of purpose. If he should discover that the young girls are here (which, fortunately, is all but impossible), in his intense anxiety to have them

under the protection of his own impious influence, he would go to any and every extremity. Therefore, from this moment, my dear mother, redouble your vigilance, that no one be admitted during the night. This quarter is so lonely!"

"Make yourself easy, my dear daughter, we are sufficiently protected. Our porter and gardeners, well armed, take their rounds every night on the side of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital; the walls are high, and thickly studded with points of iron in the parts most easy of access. But still I thank you, my dear daughter, for having thus warned me. We will redouble our precautions."

"Especially to-night, my dear mother!"

"And why to-night?"

"Because, if this infernal soldier had the unheard-of audacity to attempt anything, he would do so this night."

"And how do you know that, my dear daughter?"

"Our information assures us of it," replied the princess, with a slight embarrassment, which did not escape the superior, who was, however, too self-possessed and cautious to appear to observe it. She had her suspicions, however, that there were certain things concealed from her.

"To-night, then," replied Mother Sainte-Perpétue, "we will redouble our vigilance. But since I have the pleasure of seeing you, my dear daughter, I will avail myself of the occasion to say two words as to the marriage in question."

"Yes, pray do, my dear mother," said the princess, eagerly, "for it is very important. The young Baron de Brisville is a man full of ardent devotion in this time of revolutionary impiety: he takes the sacrament openly, and may be of great service to us; he is a member of the chamber, and has the ear of the house, and is not deficient in a kind of aggressive and provoking eloquence; and I know of no one who gives to his assertions a more dashing air, or to his faith a more uncommon attraction. He

is a correct calculator, for his cavalier and off-hand manner of talking of religious affairs piques and excites the curiosity of the indifferent. Fortunately, circumstances are such that he may show a bold violence against our opponents, without the least danger; and that redoubles his zeal as a would-be martyr. In a word, he is with us; and, in return, this marriage is his due, and must take place. Besides, you know, dear mother, that he intends to offer a hundred thousand francs to the Charity of Ste. Marie the day when he comes into possession of Mlle. Baudricourt's fortune."

"I never had the slightest doubt of M. de Brisville's excellent intentions on the subject of a charity which claims the sympathy of all pious persons," replied the superior, discreetly; "but I did not anticipate so many obstacles on the part of the young lady."

"What do you mean?"

"This young lady whom I had hitherto believed timidity, submission, subjection, — let me use the full phrase, — idiotism itself, instead of being, as I expected, overjoyed at this proposition of marriage, asks time for reflection."

"That's annoying!"

"She opposes a passive resistance. I told her (but in vain) with much severity, that, being destitute of parents, friends, and confided absolutely to my care, she ought to see with my eyes, hear with my ears, and, when I assure her that this union is suitable to her in every respect, that she ought to comply without the slightest objection or reflection."

"Of course! It is impossible to think in a manner more proper and sensible."

"She replied that she should like to see M. de Brisville, and know his disposition before she entered into any engagement."

"How very ridiculous, after you had been responsible for his morality, and thought the match eligible!"

"Well, this morning, I observed to Mlle. Baudricourt that up to this time I had not used towards her anything but mildness and persuasion; but that, if she drove me to it, I should be compelled, in spite of myself, and for her sake, to act with severity, in order to overcome her obstinacy; and that I should separate her from her companions, put her in a cell, and on the most compulsory system, until she resolved, after all, to be happy and marry an honourable man."

"Well, after these threats, my dear mother?"

"Well, I hope they will have a good effect. She had in her country a friend with whom she corresponded. I suppressed the correspondence, as I thought it dangerous; and now she is under my sole influence, and I hope we shall arrive at our wished-for end. But you see, my dear daughter, that it is not without trouble and crosses that we can attain the good we desire."

"I am sure of M. de Brisville, and will answer for it, if he marries Mlle. Baudricourt, that —"

"You know, my dear daughter," said the superior, interrupting the princess, "that if it concerned me individually I should refuse; but to give to the charity is to give to God, and I cannot prevent M. de Brisville from increasing the sum of his own good works. But something most distressing has occurred!"

"What is that, my dear mother?"

"The *Sacré Cœur* disputes with us and overbids us in the purchase of an estate every way advantageous and desirable for its possessor. Some persons are never satisfied! However, I did not scruple to speak my mind very sharply and severely to the abbess herself."

"She told me so," replied Madame de Saint-Dizier, "but attributed her conduct to the stern necessity of practising a rigid economy."

"What! You visit her, then, do you, my dear daughter?" demanded the superior, with the most undisguised astonishment.

"I met her lately at the house of a friend," replied Madame de Saint-Dizier, with a slight hesitation in her manner, which the holy Mother Sainte-Perpétue appeared not to notice, but merely resumed the subject by saying:

"I really cannot account for our establishment having incurred the jealousy and dislike of the *Sacré Cœur*, as it appears to have done. There is no end to the ill-natured reports it has spread respecting the Charity of Ste. Marie; but some persons are always chagrined and annoyed at the success of their neighbours."

"Well, then, dear mother," said the princess, in a conciliating tone, "let us hope that the splendid donation you will receive from M. de Brisville may serve to atone for the vexations you have experienced from the superior of the *Sacré Cœur*. This marriage would then be doubly advantageous, my dear mother; for it would place a large fortune in the hands of one of our own party, who would employ it as it ought to be spent. With an income of one hundred thousand francs per annum the power of our new ally would be of immense importance; and we should then possess an organ worthy of our cause, and be no longer under the necessity of leaving our defence in the hands of such men as this M. Dumoulin."

"There is, nevertheless, much force and power in his writing; he always reminds me of Saint-Bernard, when angrily reproving the impiety of the age."

"Ah, my dear mother, if you only knew what a very strange description of saint M. Dumoulin would make! I could tell you — but no, I will not sully my lips or offend your ears; all I can say is, that such defenders as he is would peril any cause, however holy. Adieu, then, dear and holy mother, till I see you again, and pray attend to my request touching the increase of every precaution against any attempt during the night on the part of the old soldier I spoke of. His return just now is most perplexing."

"Nay, my daughter, be under no alarm, — I will carefully attend to your wishes. Oh, I forgot! Mlle. Florine has been here to beseech a favour at my hands; it is to request you will take her into your service. You know the fidelity with which she obeyed your orders respecting her attendance upon your unfortunate niece. Now it seems to me you owe her some little recompense, and by taking her to be about yourself you would for ever bind her to your interests, as well as very greatly oblige and serve me, who feel a lively interest in the young person's welfare."

"My dear mother, since you are interested for the girl, the thing is settled at once, and I will take her into my service with pleasure; and, indeed, now I think of it, it is probable she may be of more utility to me than I at first thought of."

"A thousand thanks, dear daughter, for your ready compliance with my wishes! I shall soon see you again, I trust. We shall have a long conference, at two o'clock the day after to-morrow, with his eminence and my lord-marquis. Do not forget it!"

"Never fear, dear mother; rely on my punctuality. But pray excuse my again begging you to redouble every ordinary precaution to-night, lest a great scandal arise to the holy establishment over which you preside."

After respectfully kissing the superior's hand, Madame de Saint-Dizier went out by a large door leading from the abbess's small private apartment to a salon which opened upon the principal staircase. A few seconds had elapsed after the departure of the princess, when a side door opened, and Florine stood before the abbess of Ste. Marie. The superior was sitting, and Florine approached with an air of timid humility.

"Did you not meet the Princesse de Saint-Dizier?" inquired Saint-Perpétue.

"No, holy mother, I was waiting in the gallery whose windows look into the gardens."

"The princess takes you into her service from this very day," said the superior.

Involuntarily a movement of vexation and surprise escaped Florine as she hastily said, "Me, holy mother? Nay, I—"

"I requested her to do so in your name; and you, of course, accept the permission," replied the superior, in an imperious tone.

"But, holy mother, I begged of you not to—"

"I have said that you accept the situation offered you without a word," persisted the superior, in a voice so firm and positive that Florine, incapable of any further resistance, cast down her eyes, and said, in a low and broken voice:

"I accept it, if it must be so."

"I order you to do so, in the name of M. Rodin."

"Alas, I thought so, holy mother!" replied Florine, mournfully. "And what are the conditions attached to my entering the princess's service?"

"Precisely the same as those which accompanied your employment with her niece."

Florine shuddered, yet, rallying her self-possession, she said:

"Then I shall be required to make frequent secret reports concerning the princess?"

"You will observe all, remember all, and repeat all you see or hear."

"I will obey, holy mother."

"Your first care will be to take particular heed of every visit the princess may henceforward receive from the superior of the *Sacré Cœur;* you must carefully note down everything you observe during such visits, and endeavour to glean as much of the conversation that passes as you possibly can. This is necessary to preserve Madame de Saint-Dizier from dangerous influences."

"Depend upon my obedience, holy mother."

"Your next object will be to endeavour to find out

the reason why two young orphan girls were brought hither by Madame Grivois, the princess's confidential attendant, with orders to treat them with the utmost severity."

"I will endeavour to do so, holy mother."

"Added to which, you will also keep a close and accurate account of all that passes on every subject that may appear to you to be of the slightest importance. That will suffice for to-day; to-morrow I shall have some very particular instructions to give you relative to another affair."

"I understand you, holy mother, and shall attend to what you have said."

"If I find you faithfully discharge the duties appointed you, and conduct yourself satisfactorily and according to the instructions you have received, you will, ere long, quit the princess's service, to become head-woman to a young and newly married lady, which would ensure you an excellent and permanent situation, upon the same conditions as those now required — you understand? And now, then, it is understood — by every one, if you please — that you enter the household of Madame de Saint-Dizier in consequence of having solicited me to procure that favour for you."

"I will remember, holy mother, and speak of it as you desire me."

"Who is the deformed young person by whom you are accompanied?"

"A poor, destitute creature, but very intelligent, and evidently above the condition in which she is placed. She is a plain needlewoman; but, work having failed her, she is reduced to the utmost indigence. I made the strictest inquiries respecting her this morning, when I went to fetch her, and every one spoke in the highest terms of her."

"She is plain in countenance, and deformed in figure, I understand?"

"Her features, though plain, are very interesting and expressive, but she is much deformed."

It appeared to fall in with the wishes, or views, of the superior, that the person thus brought before her notice was gentle, unassuming, and of unprepossessing exterior. After pausing a few minutes, as though reflecting on the matter, she added:

"Intelligent, you say?"

"Very much so."

"And absolutely destitute?"

"Perfectly unprovided — without a resource, save in her own industry."

"Is she pious?"

"She does not attend to outward forms."

"That matters but little," said the superior, mentally, "if she be but intelligent and clever; that will answer my purpose." Then, speaking aloud, she said, "Can you answer for her being an expert needlewoman?"

"I think I can, holy mother."

The superior rose, went to a bookcase, and took out a sort of register, or list of various names and departments of service, and appeared for some time to be attentively examining its contents; then, replacing the book, she said:

"Let the young person come in, and do you await me in the workroom."

"Deformed, intelligent, and a skilful needlewoman," said the superior, thoughtfully, "she would excite no suspicions — we must see —"

At this instant Florine returned with La Mayeux, whom she at once introduced to the superior, and then withdrew, in obedience to the commands she had received.

The poor sempstress was agitated, — trembling, and evidently affected by some recent occurrence; in truth, she could scarcely preserve her composure, or credit her senses, while thinking of the singular discovery she had

just made while awaiting the return of Florine in the vestibule overlooking the garden. It was not without a degree of terror, mixed with vague apprehensions of ill, that La Mayeux found herself alone with the abbess of the convent of Ste. Marie.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEMPTATION.

THE origin of La Mayeux's uneasiness and agitation was as follows:

Florine, when summoned to the presence of the superior, had left the young girl in a long vestibule, furnished with benches, and forming a sort of antechamber to the apartments on the first floor of the building.

Finding herself alone, La Mayeux had mechanically approached a window opening on the garden of the convent, bounded on this side by a half demolished wall, and terminated at one end by a wooden palisading, the upper part of which was merely latticed; this wall, which served as a boundary and divisionary line between the convent garden and that of an adjacent house, led also to a chapel now in process of erection.

While observing the singular form of the adjoining house, with its dome-shaped roof, its closely grated windows, and sombre, gloomy air, the attention of La Mayeux was suddenly attracted by the appearance of a young female at one of the windows of the ground floor, who, earnestly gazing on the opposite building of the convent, kept making repeated gestures, at once affectionate and encouraging.

From the situation in which she stood, La Mayeux could not discern to whom these signals of intelligence were addressed; but she could well observe the extreme loveliness of the person from whom they proceeded, the

exquisite brilliancy of her complexion, the lustre of her full, dark eye, and the gentle, benevolent smile which played on her lips; yet she doubted not but these pantomimic demonstrations of regard were fully understood and reciprocated by the party to whom they were intended, and who evidently responded to them in corresponding assurances of affection; for almost immediately after, the fair stranger, placing her left hand on her heart, with a gesture at once graceful and expressive, intimated, by a motion of her right hand, that her heart would fain take her to the spot on which her eyes so earnestly gazed, might she but follow its impulse.

The sun, darting forth its subdued rays from the wintry clouds which obscured it, cast a gleam of brightness on the rich hair of the pale and delicate creature who stood closely pressed against the iron bars of her window, and surrounded with a halo of rich light the masses of golden-tinted hair which streamed over her neck and shoulders.

At the sight of this beauteous countenance, shaded by the thick veil of rich auburn curls which hung adown her cheeks, La Mayeux started, and involuntarily the idea of its being Mlle. de Cardoville recurred to her, and she felt assured (and with justice too) that the protectress of Agricola was before her.

Her finding this young and lovely being the wretched occupant of a madhouse, recollecting as she did the kindness and delicacy with which she had received Agricola, shot a keen pang through the kind and feeling heart of La Mayeux, who, while fully believing the report of her madness, could not help fancying she had never seen features apparently more illumined with graceful intelligence than were those of Mlle. Cardoville at that very minute.

All at once the fair creature, on whom La Mayeux's eyes were fixed, seemed to start, — made an expressive gesture of haste, placed her finger on her lips, blew

two kisses in the same direction to which all her signals had been directed, and quickly disappeared.

Remembering the important revelations which Agricola had to make to Mlle. de Cardoville, La Mayeux regretted so much the more severely the impossibility of gaining access to her, as she felt convinced that, if she were really out of her senses, at least she had her lucid intervals.

The young sempstress remained plunged in these uneasy reflections, when she was aroused by the return of Florine, accompanied by one of the sisters of the convent.

La Mayeux was, therefore, constrained to preserve silence as to the interesting discovery she had just made, and, quickly following her conductor, found herself in the presence of the superior, who, after casting a rapid and scrutinising glance over the physiognomy of the young needlewoman, was so entirely satisfied with the gentle goodness and timid amiability of its expression that she hesitated not to give entire credence to all Florine had advanced in her favour.

"Approach, my dear daughter," said Mother Perpétue, in an affectionate tone, "I have heard from Florine the painful circumstances in which you are placed. Is it really the case that you are destitute of employment at present?"

"Yes, indeed, madame, I am sorry to say it is too true."

"Call me mother, my dear child; that name sounds more pleasantly, and is, besides, according to the rules of our holy house. I need scarcely ask you what are your principles?"

"I have always maintained myself honestly by my labour, holy mother," replied La Mayeux, with a touching simplicity, and an air at once dignified and modest.

"I doubt it not, my child; indeed, I have many reasons for thinking you have acted wisely and well; and you should bless the Lord, who has placed you out

of reach of many temptations with which others are assailed. Tell me, are you skilful at your business?"

"I have always done my best, holy mother, to please and satisfy those who have employed me, and have generally succeeded in so doing. But, if you would please to set me to work, you could then judge of my abilities better than I can."

"Nay, nay, my child, what you say respecting them is quite sufficient. You prefer, I think, working by the day?"

"Mlle. Florine told me, holy mother, that I must not hope to be allowed to take the work home with me."

"Not at present, my child; but hereafter, perhaps, should an opportunity occur, I may be enabled to manage this for you. I can offer you this for the present. I have been applied to, by a most respectable old lady, to recommend to her a daily workwoman; introduced by me, you will instantly be engaged, the charity will take upon itself to provide you with suitable attire, and you will pay back the sum advanced by little and little from what you earn, for you will receive your pay through our hands; your remuneration will be two francs a day, does that appear enough to satisfy you?"

"Enough! Oh, holy mother, it exceeds my utmost hopes!"

"You will only be occupied from nine in the morning till six in the evening, so that you will still have several hours at your own disposal. You see the conditions are very easy, are they not?"

"Oh, very, very easy, holy mother!"

"I ought, in the first place, to explain to you where it is the charity proposes to place you; it is in the family of a widow lady named Madame de Brémont, a person of extreme piety, and in whose house I believe and hope you would have only the best examples in every respect, or, if indeed it turned out otherwise, why, you would let me know?"

"I do not quite understand, holy mother," said La Mayeux, with a sort of bewildered surprise.

"Then just listen to me, my dear daughter," said Mother Sainte-Perpétue, with an increasingly bland and affectionate manner: "Ste. Marie's Charity has a holy and a double aim in view; you can understand, can you not, that if it is our duty to afford the heads of families every requisite guarantee for the morality of those persons who are placed through our recommendation in the midst of their household, so it is equally an obligation upon us to satisfy those whom we introduce into an establishment as to the correctness and propriety of those to whom we send them."

"Nothing can be more fair and prudent on both sides, holy mother."

"Certainly, daughter, it is, as you observe, fair on both sides; for, as an ill-conducted servant might cause serious annoyance in a family of respectability, so, by the same rule, a mother or mistress of improper conduct or principles might exercise a very dangerous influence over the minds of their domestics, or those who merely serve them in a daily capacity. Now it is to offer a mutual guarantee to virtuous servants and employers that our charity has been instituted."

"Ah, madame," said La Mayeux, innocently, "those who could devise such a scheme deserve the thanks and blessings of every one."

"No doubt, my child; and our charity may justly claim these thanks, since it performs all it undertakes to do. Now, for example: a young and interesting person — like yourself, for instance — is placed with persons whom we believe to be of irreproachable morals; but should she perceive, either in her employers or in those who habitually frequent the house, any irregularity of manners, the slightest tendency towards an irreligious mode of opinion, or, in fact, anything calculated to offend decency, modesty, or good sense, why, then, she

would come to us, her protectors, and give us a detailed and confidential account of all that has alarmed her notions of propriety. Nothing can be more just than that, can it?"

"No, holy mother," answered La Mayeux, timidly, while she began to think these precautions and provisions were somewhat singular.

"Then," continued the superior, "should the case appear serious, we advise our protégées to observe more closely still, in order to be well convinced whether their alarms be well founded or not. Fresh matter for confidential communication is brought to us; and should our apprehensions be confirmed, then, faithful to our pious charge, we immediately withdraw our protégée from the risk of moral contamination; but, as a great number of persons in humble life, spite of their virtuous, well-intentioned minds, are not always gifted with sufficient discrimination of that which is hurtful to their souls, we prefer, for their own good, that every eighth day they should relate to us (as a child would to its parent), either verbally or in writing, everything that has passed during the week in the houses in which they are placed, so that we can decide for them — whether to allow them to continue residents in such households or to withdraw them. We have at this present time nearly a hundred individuals companions to ladies, shopwomen, servants, and daily workwomen, placed according to these conditions in a vast number of families, and, for the interest of all concerned, we have daily reason to rejoice in the good effects of the plan adopted. You fully comprehend, my dear daughter, do you not?"

"Quite — quite, holy mother," answered La Mayeux, becoming more and more embarrassed. She possessed too much uprightness of mind, as well as sagacity, not to perceive that this system of mutually assuring the morality of masters and servants resembled a species of familiar espionage, — a kind of betrayal of the freedom

and liberty of the domestic hearth, organised upon a vast scale, and executed, by the objects of the charity's patronage, almost unknown to themselves; for it was scarcely possible to disguise more skilfully or speciously the habit of repeating all they heard, or to conceal more artfully the base and treacherous part assigned to those who unconsciously fulfilled the nefarious purposes of the sinister spirits, whose puppets they unknowingly were.

"If I have entered into these long details, my dear daughter," said the superior, taking the silence of La Mayeux for consent, "it is in order to show you that you would not be obliged to remain against your inclination in a house where, I repeat, contrary to our expectations, you would not at all times be surrounded with good and pious examples. Now the family of Madame de Brémont, where I propose to establish you, is indeed a holy and godly one. Certainly I have been told (though I am far from giving credit to it) that the daughter of Madame Brémont, Madame de Noisy, who has recently come to live with her, is not altogether exemplary in her conduct, — that she does not perform her religious duties with befitting regularity, and that, during the absence of her husband, who is now in America, she receives the unfortunately too assiduous visits of a rich manufacturer named M. Hardy."

At this mention of Agricola's patron, La Mayeux could not restrain a movement of surprise, while a faint blush coloured her pale cheek.

The superior, however, construing both the start and the blush into a proof of the sensitive modesty of the young sempstress, proceeded to say:

"I thought it right, my daughter, to tell you all this, in order that you might be completely on your guard, and, for the same reason, I have reverted to the rumours afloat concerning Madame de Noisy. At the same time, I must repeat that I entirely disbelieve them, because the daughter of Madame de Brémont has been too well

brought up, and had too holy examples constantly before her, ever to be capable of so far forgetting herself; besides, being in the house from morning till evening, no one could have a better opportunity than yourself of judging how far these reports are true or false. If, unhappily, you should suppose the former to be the case, why, then, my child, you would be sure to come and lay before me all your most minute reasons for coming to that conclusion; and, if I concurred in your opinion, I should instantly withdraw you from that house, because the sanctity of the mother would not sufficiently compensate for the deplorable example the improper conduct of the daughter would afford; for, from the instant you become a member of our charity, I hold myself responsible for your safety, and even in the event of your tenderness of conscience or religious scruples obliging you to quit Madame de Brémont, should you remain any length of time unemployed, the charity, if perfectly satisfied with your zeal and conduct, will allow you a franc a day until another situation can be procured for you. Thus, you perceive, my dear daughter, you have everything to gain and nothing to lose by the transaction. Now, I believe, I have named everything; it is, therefore, a settled thing that you go to Madame de Brémont the day after to-morrow?"

La Mayeux found herself most terribly perplexed. Sometimes she believed her first suspicions were correct; and, spite of her natural timidity, her pride revolted at the idea that, because she was poor and destitute, she should be supposed capable of selling herself as a spy, through the temptation of a liberal salary. Then her mind refused to admit the belief that a woman of the age and calling of the superior would descend to address to her a proposition alike disgraceful to the proposer or the accepter. At last, while blaming herself for the injurious suspicions she had entertained, she came to the conclusion, that, before employing her, the superior

was desirous of testing the integrity of her principles by subjecting her to a hard and trying proof through the offer of pay, to her so great and dazzling.

With that natural desire to think well of every one, which formed part of La Mayeux's character, she determined to adopt this last idea, in which she was further strengthened by reflecting that, even if wrong, it would be the least offensive way of refusing the unworthy offers of the superior.

With a movement wholly devoid of pride, but which spoke the full sense she entertained of what was due to herself, the young workwoman, raising her head, which she had hitherto kept modestly bent downwards, looked the superior full in the face, in order that the sincerity of her words might be seen in her countenance, and said, in a slightly tremulous voice, forgetting in her agitation the form of address dictated:

"Madame, it is not for me to blame you for having thus subjected me to such proof as this. You see in me a poor, distressed creature, who as yet has had no means of proving myself worthy of your confidence; but, poor as I am, be assured that no temptation in the world should ever induce me to disgrace myself by the performance of such an action as that you were, no doubt, obliged to propose to me, in order that my refusal might convince you I am worthy of your kind assistance. No, no, madame, not all the wealth in the world should ever induce me to become a spy, or reveal the actions of those who gave me the means of subsistence, and permitted me to enter their house."

La Mayeux pronounced these last words with so much animation, that a bright crimson suffused her whole countenance.

The superior had too much tact and experience not to feel and know that La Mayeux spoke from the sincerity of her heart; and, glad to see the light in which the young girl placed her motives for making the proposition

she had done, she smiled blandly on her, and, extending her arms, said, in a tone of affectionate approbation:

"Excellent, my child — most excellent! Let me embrace you!"

"Holy mother, so much goodness on your part quite confuses me. I —"

"Nay, my daughter, rather let me thank you for the happiness it gives me to hear such words of upright and determined honesty from one so young, and so exposed to temptation; but dismiss from your mind the idea that I have been merely putting your principles to any test, because nothing can be less like treachery or espionage than those marks of filial confidence, which we require of our protégées, solely with a view to preserve their morality sound and uninjured. Yet some there are, and I perceive you, my dear daughter, are amongst the number, whose principles are so thoroughly established, and their intelligence so great, that they can dispense with our superintendence and counsels, and judge for themselves as to what is inimical to their welfare of soul or body; thus, then, I leave the whole responsibility to you, requiring no further confidence from you than such as you yourself shall consider it your duty to place, voluntarily and unsolicited, in me."

"Ah, madame, how kind — how good you are!" exclaimed poor La Mayeux, ignorant of the thousand turnings and windings, the countless resources, of the monkish school, and now believing all obstacles to her gaining an easy and honourable subsistence were all surmounted.

"Nay, talk not of kindness, my daughter, I am but performing an act of justice," interrupted Mother Sainte-Perpétue, while her accent and manner became more and more affectionate. "Too much tenderness and confidence can scarcely be manifested towards heavenly-minded children such as you, who have been purified by worldly trials, and found favour in this world, as they

will do in the next, because they have faithfully and steadfastly walked in His ways, and practised His blessed ordinances."

"Holy mother, indeed I do not deserve this praise!"

"One other and last question, my dear daughter: how often do you approach the sacred table during a month?"

"Madame," replied La Mayeux, "I have never done so since my first communion, at the age of eight years. Scarcely, by working every day, and all day long, could I earn sufficient to procure the humblest food and raiment; thus then I have not found time for —"

"Mother of God!" exclaimed the superior, interrupting La Mayeux, and clasping her hands with every appearance of the painful astonishment, "can this be true? Then you do not go to confession?"

"Alas, madame, I told you but now that I had no leisure for such duties," replied La Mayeux, looking at Mother Sainte-Perpétue with an alarmed gaze.

A short silence prevailed, when the superior said, in a voice of mingled disappointment and grief:

"You distress me greatly, my daughter. As I told you before, for the same reasons that we scrupulously avoid placing our protégées in any bad pious establishment, so also do we require persons of pious habits, and regular communicants, to recommend to our friends; indeed, to attend the confessional regularly and unfailingly is one of the indispensable conditions of the charity. Thus, to my great regret, will it be quite out of my power to give you the employment I proposed doing; still, should you hereafter amend this inexcusable indifference to your religious duties, then, perhaps, I may be able to do something."

"Madame," said La Mayeux, her heart swelling almost to bursting, at being thus obliged to renounce the flattering prospect held out to her, "I beg you to pardon me for having detained you so long — for nothing."

"Be assured, my dear daughter, I greatly regret being unable to take you upon the books of the charity; still I do not altogether resign the hope, especially because I would fain see one, already so worthy of interest, merit the further assistance and regard of pious persons, and earnestly hope ere long that by the regular observance of your religious duties you may obtain the valuable and substantial patronage of good and holy persons. Adieu, my dear daughter, go in peace; and may God be merciful to you, and bring you wholly back to him!"

So saying, the superior rose, and conducted La Mayeux to the door, still wearing the kindest and most maternal air; then, just as La Mayeux was passing the threshold, she said:

"Proceed along the corridor, descend a few steps; knock at the second door on the right, it is the workroom; you will find Florine there, she will take you back to your home. Adieu, my daughter."

As soon as La Mayeux was out of sight of the superior, her tears, which she had restrained till then, flowed rapidly; and, not liking to appear in this condition before Florine and any of the nuns who might be assembled in the workroom, she stopped for a few minutes near one of the windows of the corridor to dry her eyes, from which the tears kept falling fast. Mechanically she looked towards the window of the opposite house, at which she saw the female she conjectured to be Adrienne de Cardoville, when she perceievd the same individual issue forth from a side door, and proceed rapidly towards the palisades which divided the two gardens.

At the same instant, to the unutterable amazement of La Mayeux, she saw one of the two sisters whose disappearance had so distressed Dagobert, Rose Simon, pale, exhausted, and scarcely able to support herself, approach with timid caution to the latticework which separated her from Mlle. de Cardoville, looking around with trembling apprehension, as though fearful of being perceived.

"SHE TOOK HER BY THE ARM."

CHAPTER V.

LA MAYEUX AND MLLE. DE CARDOVILLE.

La Mayeux, agitated, watchful, and excited, leaned against the window at which she was standing, and followed with her eyes the movements of Mlle. de Cardoville and Rose Simon, whom she so little expected to see together in this place.

The orphan, approaching close to the opening of the gate which separated the garden of the community from that of the house of Doctor Baleinier, said a few words to Adrienne, whose countenance expressed at once astonishment, indignation, and pity.

At this moment a nun approached, looking about her as if she were anxiously seeking for some one; then, perceiving Rose, who, timid and alarmed, was standing close against the open work of the gate, she took her by the arm, seemed to speak angrily to her, and, in spite of some words which mademoiselle appeared to address to her with much emphasis, the sister led the orphan quickly away, who, deeply distressed, turned two or three times towards Adrienne, who, after having evinced her interest and sympathy by most expressive gestures, turned suddenly away as if to conceal her tears.

The corridor in which La Mayeux was during this affecting scene was on the first floor; and the thought instantly struck the workwoman that she would descend to the ground floor and endeavour to introduce herself into the garden in order to speak with this lovely girl with the golden hair, and make sure that she was Mlle.

de Cardoville, and then, if she had a lucid interval, to tell her that Agricola had matters of the deepest importance to relate to her, but had no means of conveying them to her.

The day was advancing and the sun was nearly setting, and La Mayeux, fearful that Florine would be tired of waiting for her, hastened her course of action. Walking with a light step, and listening each moment with intense anxiety, she reached the extremity of the corridor, where a small flight of two or three steps led to the landing-place of the workroom, and then found a circular flight, which led to the lower floor.

The work-girl, hearing voices, then descended quickly, and found herself in a long corridor of the ground floor, in the middle of which was a glazed door which led out to that part of the garden reserved for the superior.

An alley, bordered by a high hedge of box, concealed La Mayeux from all eyes as she glided along it and reached the door with the opening in it, which, at this spot, separated the convent garden from that of Doctor Baleinier's house.

A few steps from her the work-girl saw Mlle. de Cardoville seated and leaning on a rustic bench.

The firmness of Adrienne's character had been momentarily shaken by the fatigue, the surprise, the fright, and horror that had combined to overwhelm her on that fearful night when she had been inveigled into the madhouse of Doctor Baleinier, who, profiting with fiendish cunning by the state of weakness and prostration to which that young lady was reduced, had induced her for a moment to entertain doubts of herself.

But the calm which succeeds to the most painful and violent emotions, reflection, and the reasoning of a just and penetrating mind, soon reassured Adrienne, and dissipated the fears which Doctor Baleinier had for the moment excited. She did not even give the learned doctor credit for a mistake, but read plainly the man's

conduct — conduct in which detestable hypocrisy and a singular boldness of action were aided by a no less remarkable skill and finesse, and, though too late, yet she detected in M. Baleinier a blind instrument of Madame de Saint-Dizier.

Henceforward she preserved entire silence and exhibited a composure replete with dignity. Not a complaint, not a reproach, escaped her lips, — she bided her time. Notwithstanding she was allowed a large extent of liberty in her walks and conduct (always excepting the permission of communicating with any person without the walls), the present position of Adrienne was irksome and most painful, especially to her so fond of all that was cheering and harmonious about her. Still she felt that this durance could not last long. She was unacquainted with the operation and watchfulness of the laws, but her plain good sense told her that a compulsory confinement of some days, skilfully attributed to certain symptoms of derangement of mind, more or less plausible, might, in all conformity with rules, be attempted, and even effected, with impunity, but with the condition of not being protracted beyond certain limits; because, after all, a young lady of her rank could not disappear from the world all at once without, after a certain time, being inquired after, and then an implied or asserted attack of lunacy would give rise to very serious investigations. True or false, this conviction had sufficed to restore to Adrienne's mind its usual tone and energy.

Yet from time to time she vainly tried to fathom the motive of her sequestration. She knew Madame de Saint-Dizier too well to believe that she was acting without some precise purpose, and not merely for the sake of giving her some momentary annoyance; and in this Mlle. de Cardoville was not mistaken. Father d'Aigrigny and the princess were persuaded that Adrienne, better informed than she chose to let them know, knew full well how important it was for her to be on the thirteenth of

February in the Rue St. François, and that she was resolved on maintaining her just rights. By immuring Adrienne as a lunatic, they inflicted a heavy blow on her future prospects. But we may say here that this latter precaution was useless, for Adrienne, although on the road to the family secret, which they had desired to conceal from her, and of which they believed her fully cognisant, had not, in fact, entirely developed it for want of certain documents which had not been discovered or had been removed.

Whatever was the motive of the abominable conduct of the enemies of Mlle. de Cardoville, she was not the less disgusted at it.

No one could be more free from hate, less thirsty for revenge, than this noble-minded girl; but when she reflected on all that Madame de Saint-Dizier, the Abbé d'Aigrigny, and Doctor Baleinier had made her suffer, she made up her mind, not to reprisals, but to obtain by every possible means an overwhelming reparation. If that were denied her, she resolved on pursuing, contending against, without rest or truce, so much craft, so much hypocrisy, so much cruelty, not from resentment for her sufferings, but to spare other victims from undergoing similar miseries, who might not be able, as she was, to struggle and defend themselves.

Adrienne, still under the painful emotion caused by her interview with Rose Simon, was leaning languidly on one of the arms of the rustic bench on which she was seated, and kept her eyes covered with her left hand. Her bonnet lay beside her, and the inclined position of her head caused her long tresses of auburn hair to fall on her fresh and polished cheeks, which were thus almost entirely concealed. In this reclining position, full of grace and ease, the beautiful and full contour of her figure was defined beneath a gown of dark green watered silk; a wide collar, fastened by knots of pink satin, and flat cuffs of point lace, prevented the colour of her gown

from contrasting too abruptly with the dazzling whiteness of her swan-like neck and hands that Raphael would have delighted to paint. On her instep, high and exquisitely defined, were sandalled thin slippers of black satin; for Doctor Baleinier had allowed her to attire herself with her usual taste, and, as we have already said, elegance and exquisite style were not coquetries on the part of Adrienne, but a duty to herself whom God had been pleased to create so lovely.

At the sight of this young lady, whose appearance and extreme attractions La Mayeux, in the simplicity of her heart, so greatly admired, without a thought as to the squalid rags she wore herself, and her personal deformity, the poor work-girl thought to herself with much good sense and sagacity, that it was extraordinary that a lunatic should dress herself so sensibly and becomingly; and it was therefore with as much surprise as emotion that she approached very softly to the grating which separated her from Adrienne, reflecting that, perchance, this unfortunate lady was really out of her senses, but had a lucid interval.

Then with a timid voice, but loud enough to be heard, La Mayeux, in order to assure herself of Adrienne's identity, said, with a beating heart, "Mlle. de Cardoville!"

"Who calls me?" said Adrienne; then, lifting her head quickly, and perceiving La Mayeux, she could not restrain a slight cry of surprise and almost alarm. In truth, this poor, pale, deformed, wretchedly clad creature, appearing before her so suddenly, inspired Mlle. de Cardoville, so devotedly attached to grace and beauty, with a sort of repugnance and affright. And those two feelings were displayed in her expressive countenance.

La Mayeux did not perceive the impression she had caused, as motionless, with her eyes fixed, her hands clasped, with a sort of admiration, or almost adoration, she gazed on the dazzling beauty of Adrienne, whom she

had only seen through the grating of her window; and what Agricola had told her of the charms of his protectress appeared to her a thousand times less than the reality. La Mayeux never even in her secret aspirations as a poetess had dreamed of such rare perfection.

By a singular coincidence, the appearance of the *beau-idéal* threw into a sort of divine ecstasy these two young girls so wholly dissimilar, — these two extreme types of ugliness and beauty, wealth and misery.

After this involuntary homage rendered to Adrienne, La Mayeux advanced a step closer to the iron grating.

"What is it you seek?" exclaimed Mlle. de Cardoville, rising with a feeling of repulsion which did not escape La Mayeux, who, lowering her eyes timidly, said, in a gentle voice:

"Your pardon, mademoiselle, for thus presenting myself before you; but the moments are precious, — I come from Agricola."

Saying these words, the young work-girl raised her eyes uneasily, fearing that Mlle. de Cardoville had forgotten the name of the smith; but to her great surprise, and still greater joy, Adrienne's alarm seemed to decrease at the sound of Agricola's name.

She approached the grating and looked at La Mayeux with benevolent curiosity.

"You come from M. Agricola Baudoin?" she inquired; "and who are you?"

"His adopted sister, mademoiselle, a poor work-girl, who lives in the same house as he does."

Adrienne seemed to call up her recollection, and, suddenly reassured, said, smiling with kindness, and after a moment's pause:

"It was you who persuaded M. Agricola to apply to me for his caution, was it not?"

"What, mademoiselle! Do you recollect that?"

"I never forget anything that is generous and noble. M. Agricola told me with affection of your devotion to

him, and I remember it most perfectly. But how is it that you are here in this convent?"

"I was told that, perhaps, I might obtain employment here, for I am out of work; unfortunately I have been refused by the superior."

"And how did you recognise me?"

"By your great beauty, mademoiselle, of which Agricola told me."

"Did you not rather recognise me by this?" said Adrienne, smiling, and passing through her taper fingers the end of one of her long and silken tresses of golden hair.

"You must forgive Agricola, mademoiselle," said La Mayeux, with one of those half smiles which so seldom appeared on her lips; "he is a poet, and when with respectful admiration he drew the portrait of his protectress, he did not omit one of her rare perfections."

"And who gave you the idea of coming and speaking to me?"

"The hope of being able to serve you, mademoiselle. You received Agricola with so much kindness that I have ventured to share his gratitude towards you."

"Dared! Dared! My dear child," said Adrienne, with indefinable grace, "my recompense will be redoubled, although till now I have only been useful to your worthy adopted brother in intention alone."

During the interchange of these words Adrienne and La Mayeux had each, in their turn, looked at each other with increasing surprise.

For her part La Mayeux could not comprehend how a woman who was declared a lunatic could express herself as Adrienne did, and then she was astonished at herself for the freedom, or, rather, the want of embarrassment, with which she was able to reply to Mlle. de Cardoville, not knowing that that lady possessed that precious privilege of elevated and benevolent natures, to place at their ease all those who approached them with sympathy.

On her side Mlle. de Cardoville was at the same time deeply moved and astonished to hear this young girl, one of the lower orders, clothed like a beggar, express herself in such excellent and appropriate language.

The longer she looked at La Mayeux, the more the unpleasant sensation which she had at first experienced changed into a sentiment of the precisely opposite nature. With that tact of quick and penetrating observation so natural to women, she remarked beneath the wretched black crape cap which La Mayeux wore a beautiful head of hair, soft, lustrous, and of deep chestnut. She also observed that her white, long, and thin hands, though appearing from underneath the sleeves of a tattered gown, were singularly clean, a proof that care, cleanliness, and self-respect struggled against dire distress. Adrienne detected in the wan hue of her saddened countenance, in the expression of her blue eyes, at once sensible, gentle, and timid, a charm at once touching and affecting, and a modest dignity, that caused an observer to forget the deformity of the poor needlewoman.

Adrienne was passionately fond of physical beauty, but she had a mind too elevated, a soul too noble, a heart too sensitive, not to appreciate the moral beauty which so often beams forth in a humble and suffering countenance; only that until now this appreciation was quite new to Mlle. Adrienne, whose high fortune and aristocratic habits had hitherto kept her from contact with persons of La Mayeux's class.

After a moment's silence, during which the lovely patrician and the lowly needlewoman were mutually examining each other with increasing surprise, Adrienne said to La Mayeux:

"The cause of our mutual astonishment is, I think, easily explained. You find, no doubt, that I speak rationally enough for a mad woman, if you have been told I am one; and I," added Mlle. de Cardoville, with

a tone of commiseration which might be termed respectful, "I find that the delicacy of your language and manner contrast so strangely with the position in which you seem to be, that my surprise must be even greater then your own."

"Ah, mademoiselle," exclaimed La Mayeux, with so much expression of happiness that the tears of joy stood in her eyes, "can this be true? I have been deceived, and in seeing you just now so lovely, so kind, and hearing your sweet voice, I could not credit that such a misfortune had befallen you. But, alas! How is it, then, mademoiselle, that you are here?"

"Poor child!" said Adrienne, deeply moved at the sympathy which the worthy creature testified for her; "and how is it that with so much heart, with a mind so elevated, you, too, are unhappy? But take comfort, I shall not be here for ever; you and I will both soon assume the position to which we are entitled. Believe me, I will never forget that, in spite of the painful distress in which you must be at finding yourself deprived of work, which is your only resource, you have still thought of coming to me to try and serve me; and, indeed, you may serve me most importantly, and that gives me an additional pleasure, because I shall owe you so much, and you shall see what advantages I will take of my gratitude!" said Adrienne, with a smile like an angel. "But," she added, "before you think of me, let us think a little of others. Is not your adopted brother in prison?"

"Not at this moment, mademoiselle, I think; for, thanks to the generosity of a comrade, his father went yesterday to deposit the caution, and they promised that he should be at liberty to-day; but he wrote from his prison to say that he had most important disclosures to reveal to you."

"To me?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. Agricola will, I hope, be free

to-day. How can he convey this information to you?"

"He has important disclosures to reveal to me!" repeated Mlle. de Cardoville, with an astonished and reflecting air. "I cannot imagine what they can be; but, whilst I am shut up in this house, and precluded from any communication out of it, M. Agricola must not address me here, directly or indirectly; he must wait until I get out. And that is not all; he must also remove from this convent two poor children, much more to be pitied than I am, the daughters of Marshal Simon, who are confined here against their will."

"Do you, then, know their names, mademoiselle?"

"M. Agricola told me, at the same time he acquainted me with their being in Paris, of their surprising resemblance to each other, so that when, during my accustomed walk the day before yesterday, I remarked two young creatures, evidently weeping bitterly, presenting themselves from time to time against the bars of their separate cells, situated the one on the ground floor, the other on the story above, a secret presentiment whispered to me that I beheld the orphans of whom M. Agricola had spoken, and in whose fate (as my own relations) I take so lively an interest."

"Is it possible, mademoiselle, they are related to you?"

"Yes, indeed, they are; but, unable to do more, I endeavoured by signs to express how deeply I felt for them; their tears, and the distress so evidently depicted on their countenances, perfectly convinced me that they were as completely imprisoned in the convent as I was in the house adjoining."

"Ah, mademoiselle, I perceive now you are possibly a victim to the animosity of your family!"

"Whatever may be the evils of my lot, I am certainly less to be pitied than these two poor girls whose grief and despair are really heartrending to behold; their

separation from each other is evidently their greatest affliction, and, from a few words I managed to exchange with one of them just now, I perceive that they, like myself, are the victims of a vile conspiracy. However, thanks to you, we may still manage to save them. Since my being placed here, as I told you, I have found it utterly impossible to hold any communication with persons beyond its walls. I am allowed neither pens nor paper, thus writing was effectually denied me. But now listen to me attentively, and we may be able to overthrow this odious system of persecution."

"Oh, speak, mademoiselle, — speak, I beseech you!"

"Is the father of M. Agricola, the old soldier who brought these orphans to France, nigh at hand?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. Ah, if you only knew what a state of rage and despair he was in, when, upon his return home, he missed the children an expiring mother had bequeathed to his care!"

"You must enjoin him above all things to proceed coolly and quietly, the least violence would destroy every chance of aiding the poor girls. Here," said Adrienne, drawing a ring from her finger, "give him this, — he will go instantly, — but, tell me, are you quite sure you can recollect a name and address?"

"Oh, yes — yes, mademoiselle, indeed I can; Agricola only told me your name and residence once, but I never forgot it, — oh, no, the heart never forgets!"

"Enough, my good girl; then remember the name of Count de Montbron."

"Count de Montbron; I shall easily recollect it."

"He is one of my best and oldest friends, and lives in the Place Vendôme, No. 7."

"No. 7 Place Vendôme. I shall be quite sure to recollect the address as well as the name."

"Let M. Agricola's father go there this evening, and if the count be not at home he will await his return; then, let him request to see M. de Montbron in my name,

sending him this ring as a warranty for the truth of what he advances; once in the presence of the count, bid him relate all he knows, — the carrying of the orphans, with the name of the convent where they are now confined. He may likewise state the fact of my being kept under restraint, under a false charge of madness, in one of the asylums for lunatics, belonging to Doctor Baleinier. M. de Montbron will not refuse credence to this account, for truth has a powerful voice; he is, besides, a man of infinite talent and much experience, besides which he possesses powerful influence, and, I feel assured, will lose not an instant in taking the necessary steps in the affair, so that, I doubt not, but that by to-morrow or the following day both myself and the poor girls will be liberated; that effected, thanks to you, — but the moments are precious, we may be surprised, — hasten, then, my dear child, to commence the work which shall restore three unhappy captives to liberty and happiness."

Then, as she was about to withdraw from the gate, Adrienne said, with a smile so winning, and an accent so filled with affectionate sincerity, that it thrilled to the sensitive heart of the poor sempstress:

"M. Agricola told me that the goodness of my heart equalled yours. Now I can fully appreciate the full value of the comparison, and the flattering compliment it implied. I pray you give me your hand, but quickly," continued Mlle. de Cardovile, while tears of deep feeling suffused her eyes. Then, passing her beautiful hand through the rails of the gate, she extended it to La Mayeux.

Both the words and actions of the lovely patrician were impressed with so sincere and genuine a warmth that the poor sempstress hesitated not to place her long thin fingers in the delicate rosy palm of Mlle. de Cardoville, who, with a sudden burst of pious respect, lifted the meagre hand to her lips, saying:

"Since I cannot embrace you as the sister who has saved and preserved me, let me at least kiss this hand ennobled by honest labour."

At this instant steps were heard in the garden belonging to Doctor Baleinier, Adrienne started suddenly, and, gliding behind the thick shrubs, said, as she disappeared:

"Courage, Memory, and Hope!"

All this had passed so rapidly that the young workwoman had neither spoken nor moved, while tears, tears of the purest joy, flowed abundantly down her pale cheeks.

That a creature so superior as Adrienne de Cardoville should call her by the endearing name of sister, should deign to touch her hand, nay, more, press it to her lips, and even style herself flattered by a comparison with one dwelling in the very abyss of misery and wretchedness, bespoke a divine feeling of equality almost resembling the words of Holy Writ.

There are certain words and impressions capable of atoning to some minds for years of past sufferings, and with a passing glance, rapid as the lightning's flash, reveal to the soul the depth of its own greatness. So was it with La Mayeux, who, thanks to the condescending and generous expression addressed to her, for the first time in her life seemed aware of her own real worth; and, although this consciousness was as fleeting as delightful, yet it induced the poor girl to raise her eyes and hands to heaven with an expression of unutterable gratitude and happiness; for, if the young sempstress did not regularly practise (*pratiquer*), to adopt the language of religious cant, no one was more deeply imbued than La Mayeux with that feeling of deep and reverential religion, which is to the mere formalist and lip-deep professor as the immensity of the blue vault of heaven to the curved ceiling of a church.

Five minutes after her interview with Mlle. de Cardoville La Mayeux had quitted the garden, unperceived

by any one, and, returning by the road she had come, remounted the stairs to the first floor where was situated the workroom, and gently knocked at the door, which was opened by one of the sisters of Ste. Marie.

"Is not Mlle. Florine, with whom I came, here, good sister?" asked she.

"No; she could not possibly wait any longer. You come, doubtless, from our holy mother the superior, do you not?"

"Yes, — yes, good sister," replied the sempstress, casting down her eyes. "Will you have the kindness to tell me by which way I can go hence?"

"Come with me, I will show you."

La Mayeux followed the sister in trembling apprehension of meeting the superior, who might with reason be surprised at her being still within the convent, and inquire the reason of it. At length, to her great joy, the nun, having conducted her to the first entrance, opened the door, through which La Mayeux hastily passed, and with considerable delight heard it closed behind her.

Rapidly crossing the large court, she was hurrying on towards the porter's lodge, with the intention of asking him to open the outer gate, when she heard a rough voice say:

"It seems we are to keep a double watch to-night — eh, Jerome? For my part, I mean to double-load my gun. The holy Mother Sainte-Perpétue has given orders to go twice around the premises to-night instead of once."

"I tell you what, Nicolas," replied a second voice, "I mean to do; I have sharpened my scythe on purpose, — it would cut through a stone wall, — and I have turned the sharp edge outside, so that will be better than any gun; besides, that is a gardener's weapon, he knows better how to use it than any other, and I'll be bound there's ne'er a thief would venture to come anigh it."

Feeling an involuntary terror at words she had not sought to hear, La Mayeux approached the porter's lodge and asked to be let out.

"Hollo! where do you come from?" said the porter, putting his head out of the lodge, and busily employed loading a double-barrelled gun, while he surveyed the young sempstress with a suspicious glance.

"I have been speaking with the superior," replied La Mayeux, timidly.

"Are you sure of that?" said Nicolas, roughly; "because you look to me very like a rum customer; however, that'll do, now be off with you, and be quick about it."

The gate was opened, and La Mayeux darted into the street; but scarcely had she entered than she saw Killjoy running towards her, while a little way off was Dagobert, also hurrying to meet her.

Delighted at this opportune rencontre, La Mayeux was hastening to him, when a full, clear voice exclaimed from a distance, "Ah, my good Mayeux!"

The young needlewoman turned hastily around and beheld Agricola running with all speed, in the opposite direction to that in which his father was advancing.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RENCOUNTERS.

At the unexpected appearance of Dagobert and Agricola, the very persons she most wished to see, La Mayeux remained standing a few steps from the gate of the convent in utter amazement.

The soldier had not yet perceived the young workwoman; he was hurrying along after Killjoy, who, although thin, gaunt-looking, rough, and dirty, seemed to bound with delight as, turning his intelligent head from time to time to see whether his master was in sight, he returned to meet him, after having sufficiently caressed La Mayeux.

"Yes, yes, my old fellow," cried the soldier, with emotion, "I understand you; you have been more faithful to your trust than I have, you have not abandoned the poor things,—no, not for an instant have you quitted the door by which you saw them enter; you have followed them, kept watch here night and day, without food or shelter, and, wearied at last with expecting their return, have come to me to fetch me to their aid! Yes, while I was furious with rage and despair, you were doing what I ought to have done,—you discovered their hiding-place; and that proves over and over again, what every one knows, that beasts are better and wiser than men. Ah, my old Killjoy, my noble dog, we shall soon see the dear children again, thanks to you! And when I remember, too, that to-morrow will be the great day,

the important thirteenth of February, and that without you, my fine fellow, all would have been lost, I tremble from head to foot at the bare idea. Now, then, my beauty, are we almost there? What a lonely, deserted spot! And night coming on, too!"

Dagobert had continued to hold this discourse with Killjoy whilst attentively observing every motion of the animal, who kept trotting on at a rapid pace, followed by the soldier; when, seeing the faithful beast bound away from him as if joyfully recognising some person, he raised his head, and perceived Killjoy loading with caresses both La Mayeux and Agricola, who had just met at a short distance from the gate of the convent.

"La Mayeux!" exclaimed both father and son, at the sight of the young girl, and gazing at her with inexpressible surprise, "why, what brings you here?"

"Oh, M. Dagobert," replied she, with a glow of indescribable happiness, "I have such good news for you, Rose and Blanche are found!" Then turning to the young smith, she added, "Ah, and happy tidings for you, too, Agricola; Mlle. de Cardoville is no more mad than either you or I are. I have just seen her."

"Not mad!" cried the smith; "thank Heaven! Oh, how delighted I am to hear it!"

"But the dear children?" interrupted Dagobert, eagerly, and pressing in his large hands the thin fingers of La Mayeux; "have you seen them?"

"Oh, yes; a little while ago they seemed very sad and disconsolate, but I was not able to speak to them."

"Ah!" murmured Dagobert, as though choking with the conflicting emotions called up by this intelligence, and pressing both his hands on his breast, as though to still the throbbing pain he experienced. "I did not think my old heart could beat so hard. Still, thanks to my good faithful dog here, I felt almost assured the dear girls were not far off; but, for all that, the joy — the delight — seems too much for me."

"My dear, worthy father, you see everything promises well," said Agricola, looking with a grateful smile at the young sempstress.

"Come to my arms, my dear, my excellent child!" cried the soldier, embracing La Mayeux with vehement fondness; then, as though quite unable longer to restrain his impatience, he added, "but come, let us go for the poor dear children without further delay."

"My dear Mayeux," exclaimed Agricola, much excited, "you have, possibly, restored not only the peace of my father's mind, but preserved his very life. And about Mlle. de Cardoville? How did you find her out?"

"Oh, by the merest chance. And how did it happen that you arrived here just as I did?"

"Look!" said Dagobert, who had precipitately advanced a few steps, "Killjoy stops and barks!"

And, in effect, the dog, equally anxious as his master to see the orphans again, but better informed as to the place of their retreat, had stationed himself at the gate of the convent, and commenced a series of loud significant barkings to attract the notice of Dagobert, who, perfectly comprehending the dog's meaning, made a significant sign to La Mayeux, saying:

"The children are there."

"I know it, M. Dagobert, they are."

"I was sure of it! Good dog! Capital fellow! Oh, yes, animals are wiser than men, and more to be depended on; always excepting you, my dear excellent little Mayeux, who are worth more than all the men and beasts in the world. But now my troubles will soon be ended, my darlings. I shall soon see you again — soon have you in these old arms — nobody shall ever persuade me to leave you again! Come, come, I am on thorns till I reach the spot where the dear girls are!"

So saying, spite of his age, Dagobert hastened towards Killjoy.

"Agricola!" cried La Mayeux, "for Heaven's sake

prevent your father from knocking at this gate; all is lost if he does."

At two bounds the active young man was beside his father, at the very instant he had extended his hand to grasp the knocker.

"Father, father!" exclaimed the young smith, powerfully seizing his arm, "let go that knocker; if you wish to recover your lost charges beware of making the least noise."

"In the devil's name, what do you mean?"

"La Mayeux has just begged me to assure you that if once you knock at that door, all is lost."

"But how?"

"She will explain it."

And at this moment, the poor girl, who, less agile than Agricola, could not, with all her efforts, reach Dagobert sooner, advanced and said:

"M. Dagobert, I beseech you not to remain standing by this gate, some one might open it, and then we should be seen; and most certainly our being here would excite great suspicions; let us rather go along by this wall."

"Suspicions!" said the veteran, much surprised, but without moving an inch from the gate. "What suspicions?"

"I pray — I implore you not to remain there!" persisted La Mayeux, with so much earnestness that Agricola, convinced she must have some powerful reasons for urging their removal, joined in the request, saying:

"My dear father, be assured La Mayeux has good motives for what she says; let us do as she wishes us. The Boulevard de l'Hôpital is not two steps from hence, no one is likely to be there, and we can converse without fear of interruption."

"May the devil take me if I understand one word of all this!" cried Dagobert, still obstinately maintaining his post by the gate. "The two girls are there, — well,

I only want to fetch them out, and take them away; that is not a five minutes' affair."

"Indeed, M. Dagobert, you are mistaken," returned La Mayeux. "It is a much more difficult business than you expect. But come away, — oh, pray do! There, do you hear? Some one is speaking in the courtyard," And, sure enough, the sound of a voice, considerably elevated above a natural pitch, was distinctly audible.

"Come, father, come away at once!" exclaimed Agricola, almost dragging the old man away.

Meanwhile Killjoy, as though surprised at such continued hesitation, began, by loudly barking, to protest against so cowardly and humiliating a retreat, all the time resolutely keeping possession of his post by the gate; however, upon a signal from Dagobert, he reluctantly abandoned his position and gained the main body.

It was now five o'clock in the afternoon, the wind blew violently, while thick, dark clouds, betokening rain, were rapidly drifting across the firmament. As we have before stated, the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, which bounded this side of the convent garden, was generally deserted. Dagobert, Agricola, and La Mayeux were therefore in perfect liberty to pursue their council of war in undisturbed tranquillity in this lone spot.

The soldier, who could ill brook all these cautious, temporising measures, the reason of which he was far from understanding, had scarcely turned the corner of the street, than he impatiently addressed La Mayeux, saying:

"Now, then, my good girl, do not keep me longer on the rack, but tell me at once what is the reason of your bringing me away from the place where my poor children are grieving and pining for liberty? Speak at once, for I seem as though treading on live coals."

"In the first place, M. Dagobert, remember that the place where the daughters of Marshal Simon are confined is a convent."

"A convent!" exclaimed the soldier, as though bursting with rage at this piece of information. "I might have expected as much. Then," added the old man, with a calmer voice, "suppose it is, what then? I can take them out of a convent as well as any other place, can't I? I shall only go once, you know, — and once is nothing."

"But, M. Dagobert, they are confined there against their will, and against yours also; therefore they will not be given up to you."

"Not given up to me! Ah, we shall see about that, though!" And, suiting the action to his tone of impatience, the soldier turned as though going back to the convent.

"Father!" cried Agricola, detaining him; "one moment's patience. Pray hear what La Mayeux has to say before you act so rashly."

"I will hear nothing when the dear children are only a few steps from me; I am aware of it, and yet you think that, either by fair means or foul, I will not have them away. *Pardieu!* That is somewhat too much for one's patience! Let me go, I say!"

"M. Dagobert, I beseech of you to listen to me!" cried La Mayeux, gently holding Dagobert by the hand. "There is another and a better way of releasing these dear young ladies, and that, too, without employing any violence; for Mlle. Cardoville told me that violence would ruin everything, and destroy all chance of success."

"Well, if there is any other way, with all my heart; only make haste and tell us what that way is."

"Here is a ring that Mlle. de Cardoville —"

"Who is Mlle. de Cardoville?"

"Father, it is that kind and generous young lady who was to have been my guarantee, and to whom I have such important things to reveal."

"That'll do, that'll do!" interrupted Dagobert, impatiently. "We can talk about that by and by. But

now, my dear Mayeux, go on, — what about this ring?"

"You are to take it, M. Dagobert, and go directly with it to the Count de Montbron, who lives at No. 7 Place Vendôme; it seems he is a man of great power and influence, and the particular friend of Mlle. de Cardoville; by showing him this ring, the count will be satisfied you come from her. You will tell him that she is confined under a false accusation of madness in a private madhouse adjoining this convent, in which are also imprisoned the daughters of Marshal Simon, who are suffering severely from being thus shut up against their wills."

"Well, and then? And then?"

"Why, then, M. de Montbron will immediately lay the matter before high and influential people, who will assist him in taking the necessary steps to restore Mlle. de Cardoville and the daughters of General Simon to liberty, and most probably either to-morrow or the day after they will be free."

"To-morrow, or the day after! And only perhaps!" cried Dagobert. "But I tell you that I must have them out this very day, — ay, this very instant. The day after to-morrow, indeed! And then only a perhaps! Yes, that would be a nice time truly! Much obliged to you, my dear Mayeux; but here, take back your ring. I prefer managing matters myself, and in my own way. Just wait there for me, my lad, will you?"

"Father!" exclaimed Agricola, still restraining the old man. "Are you mad? It is a convent. Only consider what you are about."

"Pshaw! You are a mere raw recruit, boy, and don't understand these things. Now I do, and have got the whole system of convent tactics at the end of my fingers. Bless you! Why, in Spain I have practised the whole thing a hundred times and more. This is what would happen if I went to this convent you are so alarmed

about: I knock at the door, a man opens it, asks me what I want. I make no answer, he tries to stop me, but can't, and on I go. Well, once inside the convent, I should call my children as loud as I could, and run all over the building till they answered me."

"But then the nuns, M. Dagobert; think of them," said La Mayeux, still striving to detain Dagobert with her weak grasp.

"Oh, the nuns! Why, of course, they would pursue me, screaming and fluttering about like so many old magpies roused out of their nests. I know all about it. At Seville I went through just that sort of thing when I was fishing out a young Andalusian girl those hideous old *béguines* had got into their clutches and refused to part with. I shall let the good sisters scream till they are hoarse, and continue to hunt in every hole and corner, calling Rose and Blanche as loud as I can bawl. They will be sure to hear me and answer me; and then, if they are locked up, I shall take the first thing I can find and break open the door."

"But think of the nuns, M. Dagobert. What would they do, do you think?"

"Why, if they scream till they burst their throats, they will not hinder me from bursting open the door, taking my children up in my arms, and making off with them as fast as I can. If they refuse to let me out, why I shall have to break a second door open; that's all. So now," continued Dagobert, hastily disengaging his hands from those of La Mayeux, "just wait for me here, and in ten minutes you will see me back again with my dear girls. And you, my lad, go meanwhile and fetch a coach ready for us all to jump into."

More calm than Dagobert, and infinitely better informed as to the nature of the penal laws, Agricola could not, without alarm, contemplate the consequences which would infallibly arise from this strange and unusual mode of proceeding on the part of the veteran;

throwing himself before him, he again remonstrated, saying:

"One more word, I beseech you!"

"Why, there's no end to last words. But do make sharp work of it; be quick, or I cannot stay to listen."

"If you attempt to penetrate into the convent you will ruin everything!"

"How shall I?"

"Because, M. Dagobert, for one reason, there are men in the convent. I saw the porter when I came out just now loading a gun, and the gardener was talking of having sharpened his scythe expressly to use it against any intruders, and of the rounds they were to take during the night to guard the premises."

"Bless you! What do you think I care for a porter's gun or a gardener's scythe?"

"Never mind whether you care for them or not, father; but, listen to me. You mean to knock at the gate, you say. Well, and when the porter opens it he asks you what you want?"

"Well, and I make answer that I wish to speak to the superior, and away I go into the convent."

"But, dear me, M. Dagobert," said La Mayeux, "you are not aware that after you have crossed the outer court you approach a second door with a sort of wicket to it, and, when any person rings, a nun always examines the stranger through the wicket, which is never opened until after the business has been disclosed."

"Well, then, I should pretend I came to speak to the superior."

"Then, father, as you are a stranger, they would go and apprise the superior of your being there and desire to see her."

"And then?"

"Of course she would come."

"And then?"

"She would ask you what you wanted, M. Dagobert."

"Why, of course, I should tell it at once, — I wanted my children."

"Just one minute's patience, father. You cannot doubt, after all the precautions taken to prevent their recovery, that it is the intention of those concerned to keep Mlles. Simon in their power, in spite of anything eithey they or you can do."

"I don't doubt it. I am quite sure of it; and it was for that purpose they made such a tool of your poor mother!"

"Then, of course, father, the superior will affect not to understand what you mean, and she will say that there are no such persons as you inquire for in the convent."

"And I shall insist that they are, and bring forward La Mayeux and my dog."

"The superior will then cut short the conversation by ordering the wicket to be shut in your face, and retire."

"Oh, will she? Then I tell you what I should do, — very coolly kick the door in. You see there is no doing without that; that is sure to be required. But now let me go. Agricola, I say, take off your hands; you will drive me mad if you go on this way."

"And then the porter, hearing all this noise and violence, would go and fetch the guard, which would not be long arriving, and all your schemes would end in your being conducted to prison!"

"And what would become of your poor children then, M. Dagobert?" said La Mayeux.

The father of Agricola had too much good sense not to see the full force of the reasons adduced both by his son and La Mayeux, but he equally well knew that at all risks, and at any price, the orphans must be set free before the following day. This alternative was so fearful, so overwhelming, that, pressing both hands on his burning temples, Dagobert sank upon one of the stone benches as though utterly paralysed by the inexorable fatality of his situation.

Agricola and La Mayeux, profoundly touched at this mute demonstration of despair, looked at each other in mournful sorrow. The young smith, seating himself beside the soldier, said:

"Come, come, father, take courage. Remember what La Mayeux has just told us. Don't you see, by going with this ring to the influential gentleman she directed you to, these young ladies may be set at liberty to-morrow; or even supposing the very worst, by the day after to-morrow."

"Blood and thunder!" exclaimed Dagobert, springing up from the bench and beholding his son and La Mayeux with a look so wild, so desperate, as to make them both unconsciously draw back and regard him with equal surprise and uneasiness, "do you mean to drive me mad?" Then, recovering himself a little, the old man said, after a long silence, "Forgive me, my children. I know how wrong it is for me to give way so; but then you don't know how I am situated. What you say is right and reasonable; still, I am justified in speaking as warmly as I do. Hearken, Agricola, you are a good and an honest lad; and you, too, my dear Mayeux, may safely be trusted. What I am about to say must never be breathed to any one. Why do you suppose I brought these poor girls all the way hither from the very wilds of Siberia but that they might be early to-morrow morning in the Rue St. François? If they be not there, then have I broken my promise, — nay, my oath made to a dying mother."

"No. 3 Rue St. François?" cried Agricola, interrupting his father.

"Yes," answered Dagobert; "but how did you know the number?"

"Was it not marked on a bronze medal?"

"It was," replied Dagobert, more and more astonished; "but who told you so?"

"Father!" exclaimed Agricola, "one instant more.

Let me reflect a little. I think I can guess now. Yes; and you told me, my dear Mayeux, did you not, that Mlle. de Cardoville was not mad?"

"No, indeed, she is not; but she is kept in close confinement without being allowed to communicate with any one, and she told me that she believed she was, equally with the daughters of General Simon, the victim of a vile conspiracy."

"No doubt of it," exclaimed the smith. "Now I understand it all. Mlle. de Cardoville has an equal interest with the Mlles. Simon in being to-morrow in the Rue St. François, and is, in all probability, ignorant of it herself."

"What mean you?"

"One more word, my dear Mayeux, did Mlle. de Cardoville say that she had a powerful motive for wishing to to be at liberty to-morrow?"

"No; for when she gave me the ring for the Count de Montbron she said, 'Thanks to him, to-morrow or next day I and General Simon's daughters will be free.'"

"But, pray explain to me," said Dagobert to his son, with impatience.

"Presently," replied the smith. "When you came to release me from the prison, father, I told you that I had a sacred duty to perform, and would afterwards rejoin you at home. Well, I went to do something, which I will tell you of directly. I instantly ran to the pavilion in the Rue de Babylone, not knowing that Mlle. de Cardoville was mad, or, at least, said to be so. A servant opened the door and told me that this young lady had been attacked with a sudden fit of lunacy. You may suppose, father, what a blow that was to me. I asked where she was, and was told they did not know. I inquired if I could speak to any of her relations. As my blouse did not inspire much confidence, I was informed that none of the family were in the house. I was much

disconcerted, when an idea came across me, and I said to myself, 'She is mad, and her medical man is sure to know where they have taken her; if she is in a condition to understand me, he will take me to her; if not, in the absence of her relatives, I will speak to her doctor, a doctor is often a friend.' So I asked the servant if he could tell me who was Mlle. de Cardoville's medical attendant, and he gave me the address without the slightest objection, 'Doctor Baleinier, No. 12 Rue Taranne.' I went there, but he had gone out, and they told me I should meet with him about five o'clock at his *Maison de Santé*, which is close to the convent. This will account for my meeting you here."

"But this medal — this medal," said Dagobert, impatiently; "did you see it?"

"It was in consequence of this, and other things besides, that I wrote to La Mayeux that I was anxious to make some important disclosures to Mlle. de Cardoville."

"And these disclosures?"

"Listen, father. I was going to her abode the day you left us to ask her to furnish me with security. I was followed, and she learned the fact from one of her waiting-women, and to save me from arrest she had me taken to a secret place in her pavilion, a sort of small vaulted chamber, which was only lighted by a sort of pipe made like a chimney. After a few moments I began to see clearer. Having nothing better to do, I began to look about me, and I saw the walls were covered with wainscoting. The entrance was made of a sliding panel of iron grooves, which by means of counter weights and complicated wheels worked admirably. This is my business and interested me greatly, and I began to examine the springs with curiosity, in spite of my uneasiness. I soon discovered their contrivance and mode of working, but there was a brass knob whose use I could not detect. I pulled it towards me, then tried to push it right and left in vain. It had no effect on any of the springs. I

said to myself, this knob, no doubt, belongs to some other piece of mechanism, and then the idea struck me that, perhaps, instead of drawing it out I ought to push it inwards forcibly. I did so, and in an instant I heard a sort of grinding noise, and I saw suddenly above the entrance to the hiding-place a panel of about two feet square, which dropped forward from the wainscot like the flap of a writing-table. This panel was made something like a box, and as I pushed the spring very sharply the shake caused a small bronze medal with a chain affixed to fall to the ground."

"Did you see the address on it, — Rue St. François?" inquired Dagobert.

"Yes, father, and with the medal also fell a large sealed packet; when I took it up, I read, for I could not help doing so, in large characters, 'For Mlle. de Cardoville. She must attend to these papers the instant they are placed in her hands.' Then under these words I saw the initials R. and C., with a postscript and this date, 'Paris, 12th November, 1830.' I turned the envelope and saw it was sealed with two seals with the same initials R. and C., surrounded by a coronet."

"And were the seals unbroken?" asked La Mayeux.

"They were untouched."

"Then there is no doubt but that Mlle. de Cardoville is ignorant of the existence of these papers," said the workwoman.

"That was my first idea, for although it was directed that this envelope should be opened without delay, yet, in spite of that command, which was dated nearly two years ago, the seals were unbroken."

"That is quite evident," said Dagobert; "and what did you do then?"

"I replaced them in their place of concealment, promising myself to inform Mlle. de Cardoville; but a few minutes afterwards they entered the hiding-place, which had been discovered. As I did not see Mlle. de Cardo-

ville again, I only had time to say to one of her waiting-women some words of ambiguous meaning with respect to my discovery, hoping that they would excite the curiosity of their mistress. Then as soon as I was able to write to you, my dear Mayeux, I did so, begging you to go and find Mlle. de Cardoville."

"But this medal," said Dagobert, "is like that which General Simon's daughters possess; how can that be?"

"Nothing is more simple, father, for I remember now that Mlle. de Cardoville is their relation; she told me so."

"She the relation of Rose and Blanche?"

"Yes, certainly," added La Mayeux; "she told me so just now."

"Well, then, now," said Dagobert, looking at his son with anguish, "cannot you comprehend that I must have my children with me this very day? Do you not see, as their poor mother said to me with her dying breath, that a day's delay will ruin all? Do you not see, in fact, that I cannot quiet myself with a 'perhaps to-morrow,' when I have come from the extremity of Siberia with these children, in order to take them to-morrow to the Rue St. François? Do you not see, indeed, that I must have them to-day, even if I should set the convent in flames?"

"But, father, I must again say that any violence—"

"But do you know the commissary of police told me this morning, when I went to him to repeat my complaint against your poor mother's confessor, that there was no proof, and they could do nothing further?"

"But now there are proofs, father, or at least we know where the young girls are with certainty, we are so much the stronger. Be easy, the law is more powerful than all the superiors of all the convents in the world."

"And the Count de Montbron, to whom Mlle. de Cardoville begs you to apply," said La Mayeux, "must be a powerful man. You will tell him how important the reasons are why these young ladies should be at liberty this very night, as well as Mlle. de Cardoville, who, you

see, has as great an interest in being at liberty to-morrow; and then, certainly, the Count de Montbron will hasten the measure of justice, and this evening your children will be restored to you."

"La Mayeux is right, my dear father. Go to the count, whilst I will run to the commissary and inform him that we now know where the two girls are detained; will you not, father, and we will meet at home, eh?"

Dagobert was lost in reflection; at length he said to Agricola:

"Agreed, I will follow your advice; but suppose the commissary says, 'We can do nothing before to-morrow;' suppose the Count de Montbron says the same thing to me; do you think that I will remain with my arms folded until to-morrow morning?"

"Father —"

"Enough," replied the soldier, in an abrupt tone, "I understand. You, my boy, go to the commissary, — you, Mayeux, my dear, wait for us at home. I will go to the count — give me the ring — what's the address?"

"Place Vendôme, No. 7, Count de Montbron. You come from Mlle. de Cardoville," said La Mayeux.

"I have a good memory," said the soldier; "and now go as quickly as you can to Rue Brise-Miche."

"Yes, father, and take courage. You will see that the law defends and protects honest people."

"So much the better," said the soldier; "because without that honest people would be obliged to defend and protect themselves. So now, my dears, away, and we meet as soon as possible in the Rue Brise-Miche."

When Dagobert, Agricola, and La Mayeux separated, the night had entirely arrived.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

It was eight o'clock in the evening, the rain was driving heavily against the casements in the chamber of Françoise Baudoin, Rue Brise-Miche, while violent gusts of wind shook the door and ill-fitting window-frames. The disorder and neglect apparent, in a place once so neatly and carefully kept, abundantly proved the grave and painful nature of those occurrences which had thus brought confusion and ruin to a household hitherto so peaceful and contented, even amidst its poverty and obscurity.

Patches of mud were trampled into the floor, while a thick coat of dust covered the furniture, once shining in all the pride of housewifery and womanly care. The bed had not been made since Françoise had been taken away by the commissary. Dagobert had merely thrown himself on it without undressing, when returning, exhausted with fatigue and weariness of spirit, from his ineffectual attempts to discover the hiding-place of Rose and Blanche. A bottle and glass, with some morsels of hard dry bread, standing on the small table, bore testimony to the frugality and abstemiousness of the poor soldier, which, indeed, were indispensable in his present impoverished condition, — the only resource now left the old man being the money raised by carrying different articles to the Mont de Piété, whither, at his desire, La Mayeux had, since Françoise's arrest, carried most of the things she had before so unsuccessfully attempted to con-

vey there. Beside the iron stove, now cold as marble, for the little stock of wood had been long since exhausted, sat La Mayeux, with a pale flickering candle placed near her. A feeling of utter weariness seemed to have induced a temporary slumber; for there she sat, her head drooping on her breast, her feet resting on the lower rail of the chair, and her hands wrapped in her little cotton apron, while, ever and anon, the frame of the poor girl seemed to shiver beneath her drenched garments. Throughout the whole of this day, so fatiguing and harassing both to body and mind, La Mayeux had not tasted food; had she even thought of it, or wished to do so, she had not the smallest morsel of bread belonging to her; and it was while anxiously awaiting the return of Dagobert and Agricola that tired nature sunk into that troubled sleep, so different from the peaceful, refreshing slumber of the light-hearted and happy. Still too powerfully affected by the depths of her sympathy with the distresses of those she loved to be able long to forget them, poor La Mayeux kept half opening her eyes from time to time and sending an earnest, scrutinising gaze around the room, and then again yielding to an irrisistible desire for repose, letting her head fall again to its drooping position.

At the end of some minutes' silence, broken only by the noise of the wind and rain, a slow, heavy tread was heard on the landing-place, the door opened, and Dagobert entered, followed by Killjoy.

Awakening with a start, La Mayeux suddenly sprang up, and, hurrying towards the parent of Agricola, said:

"Well, M. Dagobert, have you brought good news? Have you —"

The kind-hearted girl paused in her inquiries; for, lifting her eyes towards the countenance of the old soldier, as though preparing to read there the joyful tidings of success in his mission, she became painfully struck with the deep gloom impressed on the weatherbeaten features

of the soldier, who, as though too much preoccupied with his own sad thoughts to be aware of the presence of the young workwoman, threw himself with an air of wretchedness and despondency into a chair, and covered his face with both his hands. After a long continuance in this meditative attitude, he rose and said:

"It must be so — it must be so!" Then walking with hasty strides about the room, he seemed busily seeking something important to his purpose. After attentively examining each article in the room, his eye caught sight of a bar of iron of about two feet in length, used to prop open the top of the stove when the heat became too great. He eagerly seized it, carefully and minutely examined it, weighed it, and then, as if perfectly satisfied with the result of his scrutiny, laid it down on the table.

La Mayeux, perplexed at the prolonged silence of Dagobert, had followed his movements with intense yet timid curiosity, mingled with uneasiness, which quickly gave place to terror, when she saw the soldier take up his haversack from a chair on which it was lying, open it, and draw forth a pair of pocket pistols, whose triggers he carefully examined.

Unable any longer to control her fears, the sempstress exclaimed:

"Oh, M. Dagobert! What are you going to do?"

The soldier looked at the frightened girl as though he only then became aware of her presence, and said to her, in a voice at once kind and abrupt:

"Good evening, my child, what is the time?"

"St. Merry's clock has just struck eight, M. Dagobert."

"Eight o'clock!" murmured the soldier, as though speaking to himself, "only eight o'clock!" Then placing his pistols beside the bar of iron, he seemed again lost in reflection, still gazing round and round the room in anxious search for something he still seemed to require.

At length La Mayeux ventured to interrupt him by saying:

"I am afraid, M. Dagobert, you have not very good news for us!"

"No!" answered the soldier; and the monosyllable was uttered in a tone so dry, so harsh, and so indicative of a desire to be questioned no further, that the poor, timid La Mayeux did not dare proceed with her inquiries, but gently and silently resumed her seat, while Killjoy, leaning his head on the young girl's lap, seemed to participate in her desire to know what was going on, and watched as closely and curiously as she did every movement of Dagobert, who, after another period of deep and earnest meditation, approached the bed, took off one of the sheets, and appeared anxiously to calculate its length and strength; then, turning towards the astonished La Mayeux, he said:

"Some scissors."

"Oh, but, M. Dagobert —"

"Come, my good girl — no talking — but do as I bid you. Where are the scissors?" persisted Dagobert, in a tone which, although perfectly kind, implied one used to prompt and perfect obedience.

The sempstress took a pair of scissors from the work-basket of Françoise, and presented them to the soldier.

"Now, then, my good girl, hold the other end of this sheet, and be sure to hold it quite tight."

In the course of a few minutes Dagobert had divided the linen into four strips, which he afterwards twisted very tightly so as to form a kind of rope, tying them at intervals with some tape supplied him by the workwoman, so as to preserve the tension he desired; then, by fastening these four pieces securely together, Dagobert constructed a rope of at least twenty feet in length, but this did not appear to suffice him, for he said, as though talking to himself:

"Now, I must have a hook!" and again he commenced a rigid search in every part of the room.

Becoming more terrified, as the object of Dagobert's labours became apparent to La Mayeux, she said:

"But, M. Dagobert, Agricola has not returned yet; and I doubt not by his delay he will bring us good tidings. I dare say he has waited to bring you some good news."

"Yes," replied the soldier, with bitterness, "no doubt, much after the fashion of mine; but," continued he, still pursuing his search for the thing he was desirous of obtaining, "I want a stout grappling-hook." And rummaging about in all directions he found one of the coarse gray cloth bags Françoise was usually employed in making. Hastily taking it up, he opened it, saying to La Mayeux:

"Now, my girl, put the piece of iron and the rope in here, it will be more convenient to carry out then."

"Surely, M. Dagobert," cried La Mayeux, as she mechanically obeyed the orders given, "you will not go before Agricola returns? In all probability he will have good news for you when he does come."

"Make yourself quite easy, my child, I shall certainly wait for my boy's coming back, — I cannot leave here before ten o'clock, so there will be plenty of time."

"Ah, M. Dagobert, I fear you have lost all hope!"

"On the contrary, I am full of hope of success; but it is in myself only." So saying, the soldier twisted the neck of the bag so as to close it securely, and then laid it down beside his pistols.

"Then, M. Dagobert, you will at least await the arrival of Agricola?"

"Yes — I shall wait for him — till ten o'clock."

"Alas! then, you are quite resolved — quite determined?"

"Quite so; still, if I were simple enough to believe in presages — "

"Sometimes, M. Dagobert, warnings are not to be disregarded — they are often sent by Heaven itself to turn us from certain danger, if not destruction," answered La

Mayeux, anxious by any means to divert the old man from his dangerous undertaking.

"Yes," replied Dagobert, "so say the old women; and though I am not one likely to mind their gossiping nonsense, I have seen that to-night which has cut me to the heart, and, most likely, I took the agitation occasioned by anger for a presentiment."

"What did you see, M. Dagobert?"

"I will tell you, my girl, what it was; it will serve to pass the time away." Then, suddenly breaking off, he said, "Was not that the half hour struck just now?"

"Yes, M. Dagobert; it is now half past eight o'clock."

"Still another wearisome hour and a half, then!" murmured the soldier, in a gloomy tone. Then added, "Well, I saw while passing down some street, I forget which, an enormous red placard. At first I glanced at it without feeling any desire to know its contents, but, looking at it more closely, I perceived it represented a black panther devouring a white horse. At this sight my blood boiled in my veins; for you must know, my dear Mayeux, that it was a black panther that destroyed a poor old white horse I had, the companion of Killjoy there, whose name was Jovial."

At this once familiar name, Killjoy, who was lying extended at the feet of La Mayeux, hastily lifted up his sagacious head, and gazed inquiringly at Dagobert.

"There!" said the soldier, sighing at the recollection of his faithful old steed, — "there, you see what good memories poor dumb brutes have! They never forget." Then addressing his dog, he said, "You remember Jovial, then?"

As the name of his old comrade again reached the ear of Killjoy, pronounced by his master in so mournful a tone, Killjoy uttered a low whining moan, then by a faint bark intimated that he had by no means forgotten his old friend and companion.

"Indeed, M. Dagobert," said La Mayeux, "it was a very sad and singular similarity to find at the head of the placard you speak of — a black panther devouring a horse."

"Oh, that is nothing to what follows. I approached this placard, and read in it that a person named Morok, just arrived from Germany, would exhibit in a theatre several animals he had tamed, and amongst others a superb lion, a tiger, and a black panther from Java, called La Mort."

"Oh, what a dreadful name!" said La Mayeux.

"And it will appear still more dreadful to you, my child, when I tell you that this was the very panther who strangled my horse near Leipsic, now four mouths ago."

"Oh, how very shocking!" said La Mayeux; "then, indeed, you had cause to shudder at the sight of the placard."

"Wait a little," exclaimed Dagobert, whose features became still more overcast, "that is not all! It was through this Morok, the owner of this very panther, that myself and my poor children were thrown into prison at Leipsic."

"Oh, heavens, M. Dagobert! And this very man, who evidently bears you such ill-will, is now in Paris!" cried La Mayeux. "Oh, you were quite right, — you must be very careful, — it is, indeed, a bad omen."

"And so it will prove to that miserable wretch if he falls in my way, he may depend upon it," replied Dagobert, in a threatening tone, "for we have some old scores to settle together the first opportunity."

"Monsieur Dagobert," cried La Mayeux, listening attentively, "some one is hastening up-stairs; it is Agricola's step, I am certain, and he brings good news, I am sure of it."

"That will do my business nicely," rejoined the soldier, quickly, without making any direct reply to

La Mayeux's consoling observations. "Agricola, being a smith, can soon make me the iron hook I want."

A few moments after Agricola entered; but, alas! the poor workwoman discovered, at the first glance of the dejected countenance of the young man, the utter ruin of all the fond hopes with which she had been flattering herself.

"Well," said Dagobert to his son, in a tone which clearly proved how little faith he had in the success of the measures pursued by Agricola, — "well, what news do you bring?"

"Oh, father!" exclaimed the smith, impetuously, "it is enough to drive a man out of his senses — to induce him to knock his brains out against a wall!"

Turning towards La Mayeux, Dagobert said, calmly:

"There, my girl, you see; I told you so."

"But you, father," cried Agricola, "have, doubtless, been more successful — you have seen the Count de Montbron? What says he?"

"The Count de Montbron quitted Paris three days ago for Lorraine; so there is my good news," replied the soldier, with bitter irony. "Now, let us hear yours; tell me all that has happened. I want to be well assured that the justice, which you but a little while ago said protected and defended honest men, as frequently as not leaves the poor wretch who trusts to it in the clutches of the rascally oppressors, — yes, first, I want to be well convinced of that fact; and then I want an iron hook, and I depend on you for both those things."

"I hardly understand you, father!"

"Tell me all you have been saying and doing since we parted; I have plenty of time to listen to you, it only struck half past eight just now. Now, then, when you left me where did you go?"

"To the commissary who took down your deposition."

"And what said he?"

"After having listened very politely to all that I had

to say, he replied, 'Why, then, after all, these young persons are placed in a holy house of first-rate respectability, — a convent, in fact; there is, therefore, no immediate hurry as to removing them, and, if there were, I cannot take upon myself to violate the sanctity of a religious establishment merely upon your statement; to-morrow I will make the necessary report in the proper quarter, and the affair will be taken into consideration.'"

"There you see!" remarked the soldier, bitterly; "more puttings off — all in the same tale — must wait for justice!"

"'But, sir,' replied I, 'this case admits not of an hour's delay; measures must be taken this very evening to remove the young ladies from the confinement they are now kept in; for, if they are not in the Rue St. François by to-morrow morning, the most incalculable and irremediable mischief to themselves and family will arise.' 'I regret much it should so happen,' answered the commissary, 'but I repeat that it is wholly out of my power, on your simple declaration, any more than on that of your father, who, no more than yourself, stands in any degree of relationship to these young persons, to commit any breach of the established laws relative to such matters; no infraction on them would be permitted even upon the application of the nearest relative the young ladies may possess. Justice has its delays, as well as its formalities, and to these you must submit.'"

"To be sure," said Dagobert; "submission is the word, at the risk of being a traitor, a coward, and a perfidious, ungrateful wretch!"

"Did you also mention Mlle. de Cardoville to the commissary?" inquired La Mayeux.

"Yes; but his answer was nearly similar to the one I have just related. 'It was a very serious affair,' he remarked. True, I deposed upon oath to what I ad-

vanced, but, then, I brought no fact or proof to substantiate what I alleged. 'You see,' said he, 'a third person has assured you Mlle. de Cardoville is not mad. That is very insufficient testimony, because all insane persons invariably assert that they are in their right minds and senses; certainly I cannot venture upon such very slight grounds to invade the privacy of an establishment conducted by so highly respectable a medical gentleman; nevertheless I will, of course, receive your deposition, and lay it before the persons qualified to take cognisance of it, but, as I before said, the law must take its course.'"

"And when just now I wished to go to work at once," said Dagobert, in a deep, sullen voice, "do you suppose I was not aware of all this? And yet to think I was fool enough to be dissuaded from my purpose!"

"Father, I repeat again that what you meant to do was as impossible to achieve as dangerous to attempt, and would have exposed you to the most dangerous consequences; you admitted that yourself."

"So then," resumed the soldier, without replying to his son, "he formally and positively told you that it was impossible in a legal way to obtain the release of Rose and Blanche either to-night or to-morrow morning?"

"He assured me that the law could not be hurried, and that the point would not be decided for several days."

"That is all I wanted to know!" cried Dagobert, rising from his chair, and pacing the chamber with hasty strides.

"Still," continued the son, "I would not admit myself conquered. Almost in despair, yet believing that justice could not be deaf to such reasonable and equitable claims, I hastened to the Palais de Justice, hoping that, perhaps, I might find there some judge or magistrate who would listen to my complaint, and attend to it forthwith."

"Well —" said the soldier, stopping short.

"There I was told that the court closed every day at

five o'clock, and opened at ten next morning. Again I was thrown out; but, remembering the cruel anxiety both yourself and Mlle. de Cardoville were enduring, I resolved to make a third attempt, and entered into a guard-house, where were a quantity of soldiers, commanded by an officer, to whom I related the whole story. He saw how much I was excited, and the warmth with which I expressed myself seemed to touch his feelings and rouse his sympathy. I perceived he held lieutenant's rank, so I addressed him at once.

"'Lieutenant,' said I, 'grant me one favour, I beseech of you. Permit a subaltern officer and two of your men to accompany me to the convent, in order to obtain legal admittance there. Let them demand to see the daughters of General Simon, and give them their choice whether to remain there or return to my father, who brought them from Russia. It will soon be seen then whether they are in the convent by their own free-will or not.'"

"And what answer did he make, Agricola?" asked La Mayeux, while Dagobert, with a shrug of the shoulders, resumed his strides up and down the chamber.

"'My lad,' said he, 'you ask an impossibility. I can enter into your feelings, and see all the urgency of the case; but to enter by force into a convent, bless you, I should be cashiered for permitting such a thing!'

"'But what is to be done?' asked I; 'it is enough to drive one mad.'

"'Upon my life, I don't know. I cannot assist you; and perhaps the best and safest way will be to wait.'

"So, finding no hopes of obtaining anything from the lieutenant, and now believing that I had done all that human means could effect, I thought I had better return home, hoping that you might have been more successful than myself. Unhappily, I was mistaken!" And with these words the smith, overcome with fatigue, threw himself into a chair.

Profound silence lasted for some minutes. Agricola's last words seemed effectually to have put an end to even the faintest glimmer of hope, and the three persons assembled in the humble apartment appeared bowed down by the inexorable fatality of their situaton.

This gloomy silence was broken by a fresh incident, calculated to increase the gloom and despondency of the scene.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISCOVERIES.

The door which Agricola had not thought of fastening was timidly opened, and Françoise Baudoin, Dagobert's wife, pale, and almost fainting, tottered into the room.

The soldier, Agricola, and La Mayeux were plunged in so deep a reverie that the entrance of Françoise was not perceived by either; but scarcely had the poor, half fainting woman crossed the threshold of the door than she threw herself on her knees, clasped her hands, and said, in a supplicating voice, trembling with weakness, "Husband, dear husband, pardon, oh, pardon!"

At these words Agricola and La Mayeux, whose backs were towards the door, suddenly turned around, while Dagobert hastily looked up.

"Mother!" cried Agricola, running towards Françoise.

"My wife!" exclaimed Dagobert, also rising, and taking a few steps towards the poor woman.

"Dearest mother," said Agricola, stooping down towards Françoise, and tenderly embracing her; "you on your knees! Oh, rise, rise, I pray."

"No, my child," replied Françoise, in a tone firm, though gentle, "I will not rise from my knees till your father has pardoned me. My conduct towards him has been very bad; I am now, when too late, aware of it."

"Forgive you, my poor, dear wife," said the soldier, much affected, and approaching Françoise. "Did I ever lay anything to your charge, except during my first burst

of despair? No, no; it was those bad priests I accused, and I was right. But now that you are once again here," added he, assisting his son to raise Françoise, "why, there is one grief the less. And so they have set you at liberty? Yesterday I could not learn where you were taken to. No one could inform me of the name of your prison; and, indeed, I was so beset with one heavy care and the other that I had not the leisure to do more than to inquire where you were to be found. But come now, my dear wife, and sit down here."

"My dearest mother, how weak and trembling you are, and how very cold and pale you seem!" said Agricola, while tears of anguish filled his eyes. "Why did you not let us know," added he, "that we might have come and fetched you home? But how you shiver! My dear mother, your hands are cold as death!" pursued the young man, kneeling down before Françoise; then, turning to La Mayeux, he said: "Light the fire, and make it burn up as quickly as you can."

"I was thinking of doing so when your father came home, Agricola; but there is neither charcoal nor wood."

"Then run down, there's a dear Mayeux, run to old Loriot, and ask him to lend us some; he is too good to refuse us. My poor mother may be taken ill; only see how she shivers!"

Ere the words were well uttered, La Mayeux had disappeared; the smith rose from his kneeling attitude, fetched one of the blankets from the bed, and, returning, wrapped it carefully around the feet and knees of his mother; then, again kneeling, he said, "Place your hands in mine, dearest mother!" and, taking the thin, weak hands in his own, Agricola tried to warm them with his breath.

A more affecting picture could scarcely have been presented than was thus exhibited in the person of the powerful and athletic form of the son, the very person-

ification of health and youthful vigour, gazing with intense love on his feeble, pale, and trembling parent, and striving by every delicate attention to bring back the warmth to her pulse and heart.

While Dagobert, kind and forgiving as his son, fetched a pillow, and offered it to his wife, saying:

"Just lean forward a little, and I will place this pillow behind you; it will give you ease, and warm you at the same time."

"How you are both spoiling me!" said Françoise, trying to reward their exertions with a smile. "And you, especially," said she to Dagobert, — "you to whom I have caused such misery, how kind, how good you are!"

And, disengaging one of her hands from between those of her son, she took the hand of the soldier, on which she pressed her eyes, brimming with tears; then murmured, in a low, feeble voice:

"Ah, in my prison I deeply repented what I had done, believe me!"

The heart of Agricola was wrung with pain at the idea of his mother having been even temporarily made the companion of such unfortunate and degraded beings as are to be found within the walls of a prison. She, so good, so free from sinful thoughts, so pure and single-minded! He was about to attempt some consolatory words in reference to it, when he remembered that anything he might say would have the effect of paining and distressing his father; he therefore contented himself with trying to change the subject, by saying:

"And how is my dear brother Gabriel, mother? You can tell us all about him, since you have just seen him."

"Ever since his return," said Françoise, drying her eyes, "he has been quite in retirement, his superiors having peremptorily forbidden his going out. Fortunately they had not denied him seeing me, for his words and counsels have opened my eyes, and taught me how ill I

have behaved, though without knowing it, to you, my poor, dear husband!"

"What do you mean?" asked Dagobert.

"Nay, you never could have believed me capable of acting as I did for the sake of giving you pain. Oh, no! When I witnessed your grief and despair I suffered equally with yourself, but I feared to own it, lest I should break my oath by so doing; and Heaven knows how truly I believed it to be a matter of duty and conscience to adhere to the rash promise I had made, under a mistaken idea of consulting the welfare of those dear children! Still something within me whispered that it could never be my duty to grieve and distress you as I was doing. 'Alas!' cried I, weeping and praying in my prison, spite of the gibes and jests of the unfortunate beings who were my companions, 'teach me, my God, to discern the right path of duty! How comes it that the commission of an act, dictated to me by a man so justly esteemed as my confessor, and pronounced by him to be a deed of holy and virtuous necessity, has brought so much misery on myself and all belonging to me? Oh, then, pity and guide me, God of mercy! Teach me to distinguish truth from error, and enable me to repair my fault if I have unknowingly done wrong!' For some time this wish formed the only subject of my constant supplications, till, at length, the cry of the sinner was heard, and the whispering of divine mercy suggested the idea of consulting Gabriel. 'Thanks, my God!' I exclaimed; 'The blessed suggestion shall not be thrown away. Gabriel is to me as a second son; he is, moreover, a priest, a holy martyr, as I now know. If there be on earth a creature worthy of our imitation, by the practice of universal love and charity, it is Gabriel; and the instant I am liberated from prison my first act shall be to go and consult him, for he will clear up all my doubts!'"

"My dearest mother," cried Agricola, "you are quite right; that blessed idea must have come to you from on high. Gabriel is, indeed, an angel of goodness, — the purest, noblest creature in the world, and withal the most courageous and firm. He is, indeed, a model of what a priest should be."

"Ah, my poor Françoise," said Dagobert, with bitter emphasis, "happy would it have been for us all now had you never had any other spiritual director than Gabriel."

"Indeed," replied she, with much simplicity, "I often thought of entrusting my conscience to his care before he went off upon his missions. I should have felt it such a comfort to unburden my soul to one I loved as a second son; but then, on the one hand, I knew not how to break off with Father Dubois; and, on the other, I feared that Gabriel might be too lenient to my sins."

"Your sins, my poor, dear mother!" exclaimed Agricola. "Why, you never committed one in the course of your life!"

"And what did Gabriel say to you?" inquired the soldier.

"Ah, my dear husband, why did I not sooner open my mind to him? What I told him respecting the Abbé Dubois roused his suspicions. He questioned me, the dear child did, on many points he had never named to me before. We exchanged confidences with each other. He told me every thought he had, and I laid bare my innermost heart. This led to some most cruel discoveries as to the treachery of persons we had hitherto held in high esteem and respect, but whom we now found had most wickedly deceived us, unknown to each other."

"In what manner?"

"My poor Gabriel, under the seal of secrecy, was told many things stated to have come from me; while I, also under the seal of strict secrecy, was also informed of various things purporting to proceed from him. And now he confessed that originally he never had felt any

desire to be a priest, but that he had been informed that I considered my peace, both in this world and the next, depended on his taking the vows, because I felt certain that the Lord would recompense me for having given him so excellent a servant, although I could never bring myself to ask such a proof of attachment and regard, notwithstanding the claims I had on his gratitude for having rescued him, when a helpless infant, from perishing in the streets of cold and hunger, and maintaining him as my own child by means of many privations and incessant labour, as you might suppose. The poor, dear lad, thinking to gratify my fervent wishes, sacrificed himself, and entered the seminary he now belongs to."

"Horrible, indeed!" cried Agricola, almost shuddering. "What an infamous scheme! And for priests to practise it, adds even the double guilt of sacrilege to falsehood!"

"During the time all these arts were being practised on Gabriel, a widely different language was held to me," continued Françoise. "I was given to understand that Gabriel had a decided vocation for a holy life, but feared to confess it to me for fear of rendering me jealous on Agricola's account, who, being destined to earn his living as a mere workman, could not hope to share the advantages the priesthood would ensure Gabriel. Thus when the dear boy, stifling his own regrets and thinking only of affording me happiness, asked my permission to enter the seminary, instead of trying to dissuade him from it, I, on the contrary, commended his choice, and did all in my power to persuade him to persevere in his intentions, assuring him that he was acting most wisely, and that he made me truly happy by the selection of a priest's life; nay, I even exaggerated the delight, the gratification he afforded me, so fearful was I of his believing me actuated by any jealousy on Agricola's account."

"What a most infamous machination!" exclaimed Agricola, when the stupefied horror with which he had

listened to his mother's recital permitted him to give vent to his feelings in words. "Thus, then, your mutual love for, and devotion to, each other were turned against yourselves, and thus in the constrained encouragement you bestowed on his choice of a life, poor Gabriel saw but your delight at the realising of a cherished wish."

"Still, however, by degrees Gabriel began really to love the profession he had embraced. To a heart so good, so filled with the purest benevolence, what office could have been more congenial than to comfort the afflicted and pour balm on the wounded spirit? He seemed as though nature had destined him for the task by the tender zeal with which he performed it; nor would his lips ever have referred to the past but for the conversation of this morning; but, as the truth came out, and he perceived how cruelly we had both been made the innocent cause of pain to the other, then he, hitherto so gentle, so calm and timid, burst forth into the most angry reproaches and bitter invectives against a M. Rodin and some other person he accused as base and unworthy. He had already, he told me, serious causes of complaint against these two individuals, but the discovery of the deception practised upon us both completed the measure of their offences against him!"

As Françoise uttered these last words, Dagobert started and pressed his hand to his forehead, as though trying to collect his ideas; for several minutes he had been listening with profound attention to this disclosure of black treason and underhanded machinations, conducted with so skilful yet deep a villainy.

Françoise continued:

"When at length I confessed to Gabriel that, acting by the advice of the Abbé Dubois, my confessor, I had given to a stranger's keeping the children entrusted to me by my husband, the daughters of General Simon, the poor boy most unwillingly was obliged severely to blame

me, not for seeking to make these interesting orphans acquainted with our holy religion, but for not having previously consulted my husband, who was alone answerable both before God and men for the charge entrusted to him. Gabriel spoke in terms of deep censure of the conduct of M. Dubois in giving me, as he said, such improper and perfidious advice; after which the dear child, with all the sweetness of an angel, tried to console and comfort me, and urged me to return home without delay and relate everything to you, my dear husband. Seeing how much I dreaded venturing in your presence, and how greatly I suffered from distress of mind at the recollection of my bad conduct towards you, Gabriel deeply lamented being unable to accompany me; but, unhappily, he was under very positive orders from his superiors not to quit the seminary for a single hour, so it was utterly out of his power to —"

Here Dagobert, who was evidently suffering under painful emotion, abruptly interrupted his wife, saying:

"Tell me one thing, Françoise, for, in truth, I lose both my memory and reason in the midst of all these black, infamous plots and heavy cares, did you not tell me that day the children were taken away, that when you first found Gabriel he had about his neck a bronze medal, and in a pocket a quantity of papers written in foreign language?"

"I told you truly, he had!"

"And that you afterwards gave this medal and papers into the hands of your confessor?"

"Yes, husband, I said so."

"And has Gabriel never spoken to you respecting either the medal or papers since?"

"Never!"

As Agricola listened to his mother's replies to the questions put to her, a feeling of surprise induced him to exclaim:

"Then Gabriel has the same interest as the daughters

of General Simon and Mlle. de Cardoville have in being in the Rue St. François to-morrow?"

"Most certainly he has," said Dagobert; "and now I remember, he told me upon my first arrival here that he should, in a very few days, require our aid and support in a matter of infinite consequence."

"So he did, father."

"And now, you see, he is kept a prisoner in the seminary, and he told your mother he had deep cause of complaint against his superiors; and then when he spoke to us of requiring our support, he said it in so grave and sad a tone that I remarked he could not appear more sorrowful and serious if it related to some mortal combat he was about to engage in."

"Ah, father," replied Agricola, "you who know so well that the courage and resolution of Gabriel are equal to your own, must suppose then that the danger is great indeed if it inspires him with so great dread of his superiors."

"Now then," said Dagobert, "that I have heard your mother's statement, I understand all about it. Gabriel is evidently, like Rose and Blanche, Mlle. de Cardoville, your mother, and possibly ourselves, the victim of a dark conspiracy among these priests to rob him of his rights; and now that I see the fearful power they possess, the unprincipled means they employ, and their infernal perseverance in bringing them to bear, I own," said the soldier, lowering his voice, "that I feel it requires no ordinary strength to attempt to struggle against them. No, I never had an idea of such power and wicked will to work it as these black-robed hypocrites possess."

"You are right, father; and there can be no doubt those wicked and hypocritical men may effect as much harm and mischief as good faithful servants of the church like Gabriel may do good. And I believe there is no enemy so implacably dangerous as a false, designing, and wicked priest."

"No doubt, no doubt; and it is that very conviction that terrifies me, for are not my poor dear children helpless in their hands? And shall I abandon them without a struggle? Are all the chances so completely against me? Is there no hope? Oh, no, no! Let me shake off this weakness. Yet since your mother has laid open their diabolical schemes and contrivances, I know not how it is, but I feel less bold, less resolute; all this going on seems insensibly to strike terror into my mind. The carrying off of these orphans is not a solitary act of wickedness, but a ramification of some vast plot which surrounds and threatens us all. It seems as though we were all walking in the dark in the midst of venomous serpents; or as if blindfolded and making our way through enemies, and surrounded by snares and pitfalls, — dangers we could neither combat nor perceive. I cannot tell you why, but I, who never feared death, am no coward, am now afraid, — yes, to my shame I confess it — afraid of the almost supernatural power of these black-robed villains. Yes, pity me, despise me, but I fear them, and dare not oppose them further."

These words, which Dagobert seemed to pronounce almost involuntarily, were uttered with so mournful, yet convincing a tone, that Agricola shuddered, for he felt that his own heart responded but too faithfully to them.

And nothing could be more natural than for natures as open, energetic, and resolute as were those of Dagobert and his son, who would unhesitatingly have faced the greatest dangers that had presented themselves openly, to shrink with reluctance from encountering invisible foes, whese blows were aimed behind the veil of darkness and mystery. Many a time had Dagobert boldly faced death in the battle-field without the slightest alarm, yet when he heard his wife simply, yet unaffectedly, developing the system of falsehood, deceit,

and treachery, which seemed to involve the happiness of all he loved, a vague apprehension seized upon the old soldier, and a sense of impending and unavoidable danger seemed to paralyse his efforts and chill the current of his blood. Not that he meditated any change in his nocturnal enterprise against the convent, but that he now beheld it under a more gloomy and dispiriting point of view.

The silence which ensued was interrupted by the return of La Mayeux, who, aware that the conversation going on between Dagobert and his family was not intended for other ears than their own, tapped gently at the door, thereby preventing the entrance of old Loriot, the dyer, by whom she was accompanied.

"May I come in, Madame Françoise?" said the young girl, putting her head in. "Here is M. Loriot with some wood for you."

"Yes, yes; come in," said Agricola, while his father wiped the cold sweat from his forehead.

The door opened and admitted old Loriot, with hands and arms dyed a rich amaranth colour, carrying in one hand a shovel full of lighted charcoal, and in the other a basket of wood.

"Good evening, company all," said Loriot; "I am obliged to you, Madame Françoise, for thinking of sending to me. You know quite well that my shop, with all that is in it, is most heartily at your service; neighbours should always help each other, and I have not forgotten your goodness to my wife when she was alive."

Then giving the hot coals to Agricola, and placing the wood in a corner of the room, the worthy dyer, imagining from the sorrowful and preoccupied countenances of the persons in the room that his presence could be dispensed with, said, in a kind and friendly manner:

"Is there anything else I can do for you, Madame Françoise?"

"No, thank you, my good friend."

"Then I will say good night, company all." Then addressing La Mayeux, he said, "Do not forget to give M. Dagobert his letter. I did not dare touch it myself for fear I should have left the mark of four fingers and a thumb in amaranth colour. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen." And the dyer bowed himself with all the respect he knew how to practise.

"Here, M. Dagobert," said La Mayeux, "here is the letter." Then, having delivered it into the old soldier's hands, she began to occupy herself with the fire, while Agricola brought the old armchair of his mother and placed it before the stove.

"See what it is about, my lad," said Dagobert to his son. "My head aches so I can scarcely see clearly enough to read it for myself."

Agricola took the letter, which merely contained a few lines, and read it through without even looking at the signature. It began:

"At Sea, December 25, 1831.

"I avail myself of our having fallen in with and communicated with a vessel going direct to Europe to write you, my worthy old friend, a few hasty lines, which I trust may reach you from Havre probably even before the arrival of my last letters from India. You are now, I hope and believe, in Paris with my wife and child. Tell them — I cannot say what I had intended, the boat is leaving. One word — I am in France. Forget not the thirteenth of February; the future welfare of my wife and child depends upon it. Adieu, my excellent friend; rely upon the unfading gratitude of yours ever,

Simon."

"Agricola, Agricola!" exclaimed La Mayeux, "quick! look to your father!"

At the first words of this letter, rendered by circum-

stances so cruelly apropos, Dagobert turned deadly pale, and, overcome by emotion, fatigue, and utter exhaustion of body and mind, tottered, and was about to fall to the ground, when his son ran to him, caught him in his arms, and supported him tenderly for a few instants, until the sudden vertigo which had seized the old man, passing away, he raised his hand to his head, pressed the throbbing veins of his temples, then, drawing himself up to his full height, his eyes sparkled, and his weather-beaten countenance assumed an expression of unalterable resolution, while he exclaimed in a voice of fierce defiance:

"No; I will be neither a coward nor a traitor. All the black villains together shall not affright me, and this night Rose and Blanche Simon shall be set free!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE PENAL CODE.

Dagobert, for a moment intimidated by the dark and sinister machinations so dangerously prosecuted by the black gowns, as he called them, against the persons he so dearly loved, had, for an instant, hesitated as to his attempt to deliver Rose and Blanche; but his indecision ended as soon as he had read the letter of Marshal Simon, which had come unexpectedly to remind him of his sacred duties.

The momentary depression of the soldier had been succeeded by the resolution of a calm and collected energy.

"Agricola, what is the hour?" he inquired of his son.

"Nine o'clock has just struck, father."

"Make me as quickly as you can a strong iron hook, sufficiently strong to bear my weight, and bent so as to fit the coping of a wall. This stove will serve for forge and anvil, and you will find a hammer in the house. As to the iron," said the soldier, hesitating, and looking about him, — "as to the iron — here, this will do."

So saying, the soldier took a pair of stout tongs from the hearth, and handed them to his son, adding:

"Come, my lad, blow the fire, heat the iron, and forge me this hook."

At these words Françoise and Agricola looked at each other with surprise. The smith remained silent and astonished, not knowing his father's intentions, or the

preparations which he had already commenced by La Mayeux's assistance.

"Don't you hear what I say, Agricola?" repeated Dagobert, holding the tongs still in his hand; "you must make me a hook out of these."

"A hook, father! And for what?"

"To fasten to the end of a rope which I have there. You must finish it at one end with an eye large enough for me to fasten it to the cord securely."

"But what are the cord and hook for?"

"For scaling the walls of this convent, if I cannot get in by the door."

"What convent?" asked Françoise of her son.

"What, father!" said Agricola, rising hastily, "do you still think of that?"

"What else can I think of?"

"But, father, it is impossible; you will not surely undertake such an enterprise?"

"What is it, my dear?" inquired Françoise, anxiously. "Where does your father want to go?"

"He wants to-night to get into the convent in which the daughters of General Simon are shut up, and to carry them off."

"Oh, my poor husband! Why, it is sacrilege!" said Françoise, still clinging to her pious belief; and, clasping her hands, she made an effort to rise and draw near Dagobert.

The soldier, perceiving that he should have to submit to remarks, prayers of all sorts, and resolved not to give way to them, resolved at once to cut short these useless supplications, which would only make him lose precious time; and, therefore, assuming a grave, severe, and almost solemn air, which proved the inflexibility of his determination —

"Listen, wife, and you, also, my son! When, at my time of life, a man resolves on a thing, he knows what he is about; and, once having decided, neither wife nor

son can turn him, do what they can. I thus am resolved, so spare yourselves useless words. It is your duty to speak to me as you do, and, having fulfilled that duty, do not say any more about it. This evening I will be master."

Françoise, fearful and oppressed, dared not hazard a word; but she turned her supplicating looks towards her son.

"Father," he said, "one word only, but one."

"Say that one, then," said Dagobert, impatiently.

"I will not attempt to overcome your resolution, but I will prove to you that you are ignorant of how far you are exposing yourself."

"I am not ignorant of anything," said the soldier, with an abrupt tone. "What I am going to attempt is a serious matter, but it shall never be said that I have neglected any means by which it was possible to accomplish what I promised to effect."

"Take care, father; I tell you once more you do not know the danger to which you expose yourself," said the smith, with an air of alarm.

"Ah, let us talk of danger, — let us talk of the porter's gun and the gardener's scythe!" said Dagobert, shrugging his shoulders disdainfully, "and to end that matter. Well! What next? Suppose I leave my skin in this convent, are not you left to take care of your mother? For twenty years you have done without me, and so you will have the less to grieve for."

"And it is I! Oh, Heaven, it is I who am the cause of all these misfortunes!" exclaimed the poor mother. "Oh, Gabriel was right to blame me."

"Madame Françoise, take comfort," said La Mayeux, in a low tone, going close up to Dagobert's wife, "Agricola will not allow his father to expose himself in this manner."

The smith, after a moment's pause, said, in an agitated voice:

"I know you too well, father, to suppose that I shall stop you by any fear of the danger of risking your life."

"What danger is there?"

"Another danger before which you will recoil, — yes, brave as you are, you will recoil!" said the young man, in a tone of emotion which had its effect on his father.

"Agricola," said the soldier, severely and sternly, "you speak offensively — you insult me!"

"Father!"

"It is offensive," resumed the angry soldier, "for it is base to seek to turn a man from his duty by frightening him; an insult, because you think me capable of being intimidated."

"Ah, M. Dagobert," said La Mayeux, "you do not understand Agricola."

"I understand him but too well," replied the soldier, sternly.

Painfully moved by the severity of his father, but firm in his resolution, which was the dictate of love and respect, Agricola replied, not without a beating heart:

"Pardon me if I disobey you, father; but if you should hate me for it, still you shall know to what you expose yourself by escalading the walls of a convent in the night."

"Son, dare you?" said Dagobert, his face flashing with anger.

"Agricola!" exclaimed Françoise, in an agony. "My husband!"

"M. Dagobert, pray hear Agricola, who is only speaking what he says for your good," exclaimed La Mayeux.

"Not another word!" replied the soldier, striking his foot with anger.

"I tell you, father, that you are running an almost certain risk of the galleys!" exclaimed the smith, turning frightfully pale.

"Unhappy boy!" said Dagobert, seizing his son by the arm. "Could you not have concealed that from

me, rather than expose me by this to be a traitor and a coward!" Then the soldier muttered to himself and trembled, "The galleys!" And he lowered his head and became mute and thoughtful, as though crushed by these appalling words.

"Yes, to enter an inhabited dwelling in the night by escalade and forcible entry — and the law is precise — is punishable by the galleys!" cried Agricola, at the same time rejoiced and pained at the distress of his father. "Yes, father, the galleys if you are taken in the fact; and there are ten chances to one but that you will be, for Mayeux has told you the convent is guarded. This morning, had you tried to have carried off the two young ladies in open day, you must have been apprehended, but then the attempt made so openly would have had the character of frank boldness, which might have been made an excuse for your pardon; but to introduce yourself at night by escalade, I repeat, is punished by the galleys. Now then, father, decide; what you will do I will do, for you shall not go alone. Say one word, and I will make your hook. I have a hammer in the closet and pincers, and in an hour we will go."

A profound silence followed the words of the smith, a silence only interrupted by the stifled sobs of Françoise, who murmured with despair:

"Alas, all this happened because I listened to the Abbé Dubois."

In vain did La Mayeux attempt to console Françoise, for she herself felt alarmed, knowing that the old soldier was incapable of facing infamy, and that then Agricola would partake of his father's dangers.

Dagobert, in spite of his energetic and determined character, remained deeply overcome. According to his military habits, he had only seen in his nocturnal enterprise a sort of *ruse de guerre*, authorised, in the first instance, by his rights, and, in the next, by the unyielding

fatality of his position. But the fearful statement of his son had revealed the truth to him, the terrible alternative; and he must either betray the confidence of Marshal Simon and the last wishes of the mother of the orphan girls, or else expose himself, and more particularly his son, to the chance of frightful disgrace. His son! And even then without the certainty of freeing the two girls.

Suddenly Françoise, drying her eyes, which were overflowing with tears, exclaimed, as though struck with sudden inspiration:

"But, now I reflect, there is a mode by which we may get the children out of the convent without violence."

"How, mother?" asked Agricola, quickly.

"It was the Abbé Dubois who took them there, but after what Gabriel told me, it is probable that my confessor only acted by the instruction of M. Rodin."

"And if it were so, my dear mother, it would be useless to address M. Rodin; you could get nothing from him."

"No, not from him; but, perhaps, from that powerful abbé who is Gabriel's superior, and has always protected him since he entered the seminary."

"What abbé, mother?"

"The Abbé d'Aigrigny."

"Who, before he was a priest, my dear mother, was a soldier, and might, therefore, be more accessible. But yet —"

"D'Aigrigny!" exclaimed Dagobert, with an expression of horror and detestation. "Is there mixed up in all this treachery a man who, before he was a priest, was a soldier, and whose name is D'Aigrigny?"

"Yes, father, the Marquis d'Aigrigny, who, before the Restoration, served in Russia, and in 1815 the Bourbons gave him a regiment."

"'Tis he!" said Dagobert, in a repressed tone. "Still

he, always he! Like an evil demon, whether it concerns the mother, the father, or the children!"

"What do you mean, father?"

"The Marquis d'Aigrigny!" exclaimed Dagobert. "Do you know who the man is? Before he was a priest he was the persecutor of the mother of Rose and Blanche, who despised his love. Before he was a priest he fought against his country, and twice he met General Simon face to face in battle. Yes, whilst the general was a prisoner at Leipsic and severely wounded at Waterloo, the other, the renegade marquis, was triumphing with the Russians and English. Under the Bourbons, the renegade, covered with honours, again found himself confronted by the persecuted soldier of the Empire. Then there was a deadly duel between them, and the marquis was wounded; but General Simon, proscribed and sentenced to death, was exiled. Now the renegade has turned priest, you tell me. Well, then, now I am certain that it is he who has carried off Rose and Blanche, that he may vent on them the hatred which he has always entertained against their mother and father. This wretch, D'Aigrigny, holds them in his power; and it is not only the fortune, but the lives, of these children that I have to defend. Their lives, I tell you, — their very lives!"

"Father, do you think this man capable of —"

"A traitor to his country, who becomes a base priest, is capable of anything! I tell you that, perhaps, at this very hour they are killing these children by inches!" said the soldier, in agonised tones. "For the separation of one from the other is the first step towards killing them!" Then Dagobert added, with a tone of exasperation impossible to describe, "The daughters of Marshal Simon are in the power of the Marquis d'Aigrigny and his hand, and shall I hesitate to save them for fear of the galleys — the galleys?" he added, with a burst of convulsive laughter. "What is that to me? What care I for the galleys? Do they put your dead

body there? And if I fail in this last attempt, shall I not have a right to blow out my brains? Put the iron in the fire, my lad. Quick, time presses! Forge — forge the iron!"

"But your son will go with you!" exclaimed Françoise, with a cry of maternal despair. Then rising, she threw herself at Dagobert's feet, saying, "If you are apprehended, so will he be also —"

"To save himself from the galleys, he will do as I do. I have two pistols!"

"But I," exclaimed the unhappy mother, clasping her hands in an attitude of entreaty, "without you, without him, what shall I do? What will become of me?"

"You are right — I am selfish — I will go alone!" said Dagobert.

"You shall not go alone, father," replied Agricola.

"But your mother?"

"La Mayeux knows what is going on, and will go and seek M. Hardy, my employer, and tell him all; he is the most generous of men, and will give my mother bread and a shelter for the rest of her days."

"And it is I, — I who am the cause of all this!" she exclaimed, wringing her hands in despair. "Punish me, *mon Dieu!* Punish me! It is my fault; I gave up the children, and shall be punished by the death of my own son!"

"Agricola, you shall not follow me! I forbid it!" said Dagobert, pressing his son to his heart with fervour.

"What, I, after pointing out the danger to you, shall I recoil myself? Do not think of it, father! Have I not also some one to free? Mlle. de Cardoville, so good, so generous, who sought to save me from prison, is she not now a prisoner? I will follow you, father! It is my right, my duty, my determination!"

So saying, Agricola put into the burning coals in the stove the tongs to be forged into a hook.

"Alas! Heaven have pity on us!" said the unhappy mother, sobbing, and still kneeling, whilst the soldier seemed contending against a violent internal struggle.

"Do not weep so, dear mother, pray do not!" said Agricola, raising Françoise, with the help of La Mayeux; "you break my heart to see you grieve so much. Come, take courage, I have no doubt exaggerated the dangers of the enterprise; but if we both work well together, I really think we may succeed with very little risk, — eh, father?" continued Agricola, making a significant gesture to Dagobert. "But only look up and be of good heart, and I will promise you all will end well, and both Mlle. de Cardoville and the daughters of General Simon be restored to liberty. Here, La Mayeux, give me the hammer and pincers out of that closet."

The poor girl, hastily drying her tears, obeyed the orders of Agricola without a word, while he, taking the bellows, began to increase the heat of the fire in which he had placed the tongs.

"Here they are, Agricola," said La Mayeux, in a voice trembling with emotion, while she gave, with unsteady hands, the different objects demanded to the young smith, who, by the aid of the pincers, drew from the fire the tongs, brought to a white heat, which he began forming into a species of hook by the help of his hammer, using the top of his stove for an anvil, Dagobert looking on in solemn silence. All at once he took the hands of Françoise, saying:

"Wife, you know too well the disposition of our son to hope to turn him from his purpose of accompanying me; but be comforted, I hope and believe we shall succeed. But if not, if we fail, should Agricola and myself be arrested, why then — But no, we will be no cowardly suicides, the father and son will walk arm in arm to prison, with calm aspect and all the pride of men who have done their duty even to the very last effort they could make; and when the day of our trial arrives, we

will boldly and fearlessly tell the whole truth. We will state the fearful emergency which impelled us to obtain that by violence we had vainly supplicated from the assistance of the law. Work, work, my boy!" continued Dagobert to his son, who was busily engaged welding the hot iron; "work on without fear or dread, we shall have honest men for our judges, and, therefore, need we fear nothing!"

"You are right, my dear, brave father! So comfort yourself, dearest mother, good and enlightened judges will readily discern the difference there is between robbers who scale walls during the night for the sake of plunder, and an old soldier and his son who, at the peril of their lives, their liberty, and reputation, seek only to deliver the innocent victims of treachery and oppression!"

"And should they not see the justice of our defence," resumed Dagobert, "so much the worse for them. In the eyes of all honourable men, at least, your husband and child will be held blameless. Or, should we be sentenced to the galleys, why, then, if we have courage to live, the old and the young convict will wear their chains with proud satisfaction, while the renegade marquis — the base priest — will have more to blush for than ourselves. On with your work, then, my good lad, fear not to strike your hammer hard on the iron; remember that neither chains nor galley-slavery can deprive us of the consciousness of having done our duty faithfully, or attach dishonour to our names. A word or two with you, my dear Mayeux, for time is hastening on, and we must be quick. When you were in the convent garden, did you remark if the different stories of the building were very high from the ground?"

"Oh, no, M. Dagobert, they were not, especially on that side of the convent which faced the madhouse, where Mlle. de Cardoville was confined."

"In what manner did you contrive to speak to the young lady?"

"She was on the other side of a gate with open iron-work half way up it, which seemed to divide the two gardens."

"Excellent!" said Agricola, continuing to weld the iron. "Nothing can be easier than to pass from one garden to the other; and, perhaps, we shall find it both safer and more practicable to return by the garden belonging to the madhouse. Unfortunately, though, you cannot tell us which is Mlle. de Cardoville's chamber."

"Oh, yes, I can," exclaimed La Mayeux, trying to collect her ideas. "She is in a small square pavilion, and there is over the window where I first saw her a sort of veranda, painted slate colour and white."

"That will do; I shall be sure to recollect it."

"And you cannot give me any notion where the rooms in which my poor children are confined are situated, I suppose?" said Dagobert, anxiously.

After a moment's consideration, La Mayeux said: "They are opposite the apartment of Mlle. de Cardoville; for she has been able during the last two days to converse with them by signs from the windows; and now I remember, she told me that their rooms were placed on different stories, — the one being on the ground floor, the other just over it on the first floor."

"And were there bars to their windows?" inquired Agricola.

"That I cannot tell you."

"It matters not, my good girl. Many thanks for what you have told us with such clear directions; we shall be able to make them out," answered Dagobert; "and that once ascertained, I have my own plans for the rest."

"Give me some water, dear Mayeux," said Agricola, "that I may cool my iron;" and then addressing his father, he said, "Will this hook do?"

"Yes, my boy, capitally; and as soon as it is cold enough we will fix it to the rope."

All this time Françoise Baudoin was kneeling, and fervently imploring Heaven to pardon the terrible sin her husband and son, in the blindness and ignorance of their hearts, were about to commit; and earnestly did she beseech the Almighty to visit on her alone the inevitable consequences of their crime, since she only was the cause of their fatal and sinful enterprise.

The rest of the necessary preparations were completed by Dagobert and his son in solemn silence. They were calm and self-possessed, spite of the paleness of their cheeks, which, while it indicated no fear, at least proved that they thoroughly understood the perilous nature of the undertaking they were about to embark in.

In a few minutes ten o'clock sounded from the church of St. Merry; but the sounds were deadened, and almost lost, amid the violent gusts of wind and the pattering of the heavy rain, as it drove against the casements with unceasing fury.

"Ten o'clock!" said Dagobert, starting; "then there is not an instant to be lost. Now, Agricola, take up the bag."

"I will, father."

As the smith moved towards the table where the bag was placed, he said, in a low, hurried manner to La Mayeux, who, faint and trembling, could scarcely support herself, "Should we not return by to-morrow morning, I commit my mother to your care. Go to M. Hardy; he has probably returned home by this time. Come, dear sister, take courage, and give me one kiss. Remember, to your kindness and consolation I leave my dear mother."

So saying, the young man, deeply affected, tenderly embraced La Mayeux, whose strength and senses seemed all but to forsake her.

"Come, old Killjoy," said Dagobert, "you must go with us; you will serve us as a sentinel to apprise us of the approach of an enemy; so, *en route!*" Then,

approaching his wife, who had risen from her chair, and was pressing her son to her bosom, while she almost frantically kissed his hair, his forehead, and bedewed him with her fast falling tears, the old soldier, feigning a calmness and serenity he was far from feeling, said:

"Now then, good wife, dry up your tears; make a good fire, and put everything in order; in two or three hours we shall be back, and bring you not only our own two dear girls, but a beautiful young lady also. Come, give me a kiss, and wish me good luck!"

Françoise threw herself on her husband's neck without uttering a word. This mute despair, interrupted only by deep and convulsive sobs, was dreadful to witness. Dagobert was obliged to tear himself from her grasp; and, endeavouring to conceal his emotion, said to his son, in an unsteady voice:

"We had better be gone. This is too much for me. Come, Agricola, let us go. Watch over my poor wife, dearest Mayeux. Come, my son, — come!"

With these words, the soldier, having slipped his pistols in the pocket of his greatcoat, was proceeding to the door, followed by Killjoy.

"My son, — my son!" shrieked the wretched mother, "let me embrace him once more, probably for the last time! Come to me, my child," cried Françoise, wholly incapable of quitting her chair, "and tell me you forgive me for bringing this upon you. Oh, merciful Heaven! this is my doing!"

The smith turned back again, and, affectionately embracing his mother while his tears mingled with hers, he whispered, "Adieu, my beloved mother. Comfort yourself with the certainty of seeing us again ere long." Then, tearing himself from the weak arms that held him, he hastened to rejoin his father on the staircase.

Françoise Baudoin gazed vacantly around her as the

door closed on Agricola; then, heaving a deep groan, fell almost lifeless in the arms of La Mayeux.

Meanwhile, Dagobert and Agricola, a prey to the most cruel torments, quitted the Rue Brise-Miche, and proceeded with rapid steps towards the Boulevard de l'Hôpital, followed by Killjoy.

CHAPTER X.

ESCALADE AND FORCIBLE ENTRY.

It struck half past eleven o'clock as Dagobert and his son reached the Boulevard de l'Hôpital.

The wind was very high, and the rain fell heavily, but, in spite of the thickness of the watery clouds, the night was light, owing to the late rising of the moon. The tall dark trees and the white walls of the convent garden were plainly distinguishable. At a distance was a lamp, swayed to and fro by the wind, whose dim light was hardly visible in the midst of the rain and fog, as it hung over the muddy thoroughfare of the solitary boulevard. From time to time was heard in the distance the heavy roll of some belated vehicle, and then a dead silence followed.

Dagobert and his son had scarcely exchanged a syllable since their departure from the Rue Brise-Miche. The intentions of these two fine-hearted fellows were noble, generous, and determined, but yet they were thoughtful, as they glided along in the shadow, like robbers when projecting nocturnal crimes.

Agricola bore on his shoulders the sack containing the cord, the hook, and the crowbar; and Dagobert leaned on his son's arm, and Killjoy followed his master.

"The bench on which we sat down cannot be far off from here," said Dagobert, stopping.

"Here it is, father," said Agricola, as he saw it.

"It is only half past eleven, and we had better wait

till midnight," replied Dagobert. "Let us sit down a little while to rest and arrange our plans."

After a moment's silence, the soldier said, in a tone of deep emotion, and pressing his son's hands between his own:

"Agricola, my boy, there is yet time, and I beseech you let me go alone. I shall manage the business very well; and the closer the time draws on, the more I fear to compromise you in this dangerous enterprise."

"And I, my dear father, the closer the time approaches, the more do I believe that I shall be useful to you,—good or bad, I will share your fate. Our intention is praiseworthy. It is a debt of honour which you owe, and I should like to pay the half of it, so I will not now recede. So now, my father, let us arrange our plan of proceeding."

"Well, then, you will accompany me," said Dagobert, stifling a sigh.

"I must, my dear father," replied Agricola, "and you will see that we shall be successful. You saw the little door in the garden wall as we passed, that is in our favour."

"Yes, by that we shall get into the garden, and then we must find out the buildings which divide the wall which terminates by a grated door."

"Yes, and on one side of that grated door is the pavilion in which Mlle. de Cardoville is, and on the other that side of the convent in which the marshal's daughters are confined."

At this moment Killjoy, who was crouched at Dagobert's feet, rose suddenly, pointing his ears, and listening attentively.

"It appears as if Killjoy heard something," said Agricola. "Listen!" Nothing was heard but the noise of the wind howling in the tall trees of the boulevard.

"But, father, when we have once got the garden gate open, shall we take Killjoy with us?"

"Yes, yes, if they have a watch-dog he'll settle his business, and then he'll warn us if the watchmen come; and, who knows? he is so sagacious, and so fond of Rose and Blanche, that he may help us, perhaps, to discover the place where they are. I have seen him scores of times find them out in the woods with extraordinary instinct."

A slow, heavy, and clear sound, heard amidst the whistling of the night wind, began the chime of midnight.

This noise echoed painfully in the minds of Agricola and his father, and silent and startled they sprang suddenly on their feet, and by a spontaneous movement took and energetically squeezed each other's hands. In spite of themselves, each throb of their hearts answered to each of the strokes of the clock, whose vibration was prolonged in the midst of the solemn silence of the night.

At the last stroke Dagobert said to his son, with a firm voice:

"It is midnight! Embrace me, my dear boy; and now to work."

The father and son embraced. The moment was decisive and serious.

"Now, father," said Agricola, "let us act with all the boldness and cunning of robbers going to plunder a strong box."

So saying, the smith took from the sack the cord and the hook. Dagobert had the crowbar, and both of them, going along the wall cautiously, reached the small door, which was close to the angle formed by the street and the boulevard, pausing from time to time to listen attentively, and endeavouring to ascertain the noises caused only by the high wind and rain.

The night continued still sufficiently light for them to distinguish objects. The smith and the soldier reached the little gate, the planks of which appeared weak and worm-eaten.

"All right," said Agricola to his father, "one blow and it will give way."

And so saying, the smith was about to apply his shoulder vigorously to the door, bending his back and legs for that purpose, when, at that instant, Killjoy growled as if to stop him.

Dagobert silenced the animal, and taking his son by the arm, said to him, in a whisper:

"Do not stir, — Killjoy smells some one in the garden."

Agricola and his father remained motionless for some minutes, listening attentively, and holding their breath. The dog, obedient to his master, ceased to growl, but his uneasiness and restlessness were still more apparent. Still nothing was heard.

"The dog was mistaken, father," said Agricola, in a low voice.

"No, I am sure he was not. Do not move."

After again waiting for a few seconds, Killjoy laid down suddenly, and stretched his muzzle as far as he could under the lowest part of the door, sniffing very eagerly.

"Some one comes," said Dagobert, quickly, to his son.

"Let us retreat," replied Agricola.

"No," said his father; "let us listen, — it will be time to flee if they open the door. Here, Killjoy, here!" The obedient brute left the door, and came crouching to the feet of his master.

Some moments afterwards they heard a sort of trampling noise on the ground, soaked by the rain, caused by heavy footsteps dragging through the wet pools, and then a noise of talking, which, drowned by the wind, did not reach the soldier and his son.

"They are the people on the watch that Mayeux spoke about," said Agricola to his father.

"So much the better; they will not now go on their next round for some time, and that will give us two

hours to ourselves at least; and now we shall effect our purpose the more securely."

Then the noise became gradually the less distinct, and was soon lost entirely.

"Come, quick, do not let us lose any time," said Dagobert to his son, after ten minutes had elapsed, "they have gone; and now let us try and open this door."

Agricola, applying his powerful shoulders, thrust vigorously; but the door, in spite of its decay, did not yield.

"Confound it!" said Agricola, "it is barred on the inside, I am sure, or else these rotten planks would not have resisted my strength."

"What's to be done?"

"I will get on the wall by the help of the cord and hook, and then open it in the inside."

So saying, Agricola took the cord and cramp-iron, and after several attempts the hook caught on the coping of the wall.

"Now, father, make me a short ladder, and I will pull myself up by the cord. Once astride of the wall I can turn the hook, and easily drop down into the garden."

The soldier placed his back against the wall, and joining his hands together, his son put his foot in the hollow they formed; then mounting on the stout shoulders of his father, which he made his *point d'appui*, by the aid of the cord and some inequalities in the wall, he reached the top. Unfortunately the smith had not observed that the coping of the wall was guarded by broken glass bottles, which cut his hands and knees, but, for fear of alarming Dagobert, he repressed a cry of pain, turned the cramp-iron as he required it, and, sliding down the ropes, reached the ground. The door was close, and he found then that it was fastened by a strong bar of wood. The lock was in so bad a condition that it gave way to a violent blow from Agricola, and then, the door opening, Dagobert entered the garden with Killjoy.

"Now," said the old soldier to his son, "thanks to you, the worst is got over. Here is a means of escape open for my poor children and Mlle. de Cardoville. All we have to do now is to find them, without any unfortunate rencontre with any other person. Killjoy, go first, as a pioneer; go, go, good dog; and mind, be very quiet, — mind," added Dagobert.

The sagacious animal then advanced, sniffing, and listening, and searching, with all the care and close attention of a bloodhound on the quest.

By the dim moonlight straggling through the clouds, Dagobert and his son perceived about them a thicket of very large trees, whence diverged various paths. Undecided which to choose, Agricola said to his father:

"Let us take the path which runs close to the walk, and that must lead us to the building."

"Right — let us do so; and let us walk on the turf instead of on these muddy paths, — we shall make less noise."

The father and son, preceded by Killjoy, traversed for some time a winding path which ran not far from the wall. They stopped, from time to time, to listen and look carefully about them before they went on, in order to make out the various appearances presented by the agitated trees and shrubs which, shaken by the wind, and lighted by the pale moonlight, assumed fantastic shapes.

Half past twelve o'clock struck as Agricola and his father reached a large iron gate, which shut upon the private garden of the superior, into which Mayeux had obtained access in the morning, after having seen Rose Simon conversing with Adrienne de Cardoville.

Through the bars of this iron gate, Agricola and his father saw, at a short distance, an open-work railing, which enclosed a chapel that was erecting beyond the small square pavilion.

"No doubt that is the pavilion belonging to the madhouse in which Mlle. de Cardoville is confined," said Agricola.

"And the building in which are the chambers of Rose and Blanche, but which we cannot see from here, no doubt faces it," said Dagobert. "Poor dear children, they are there, no doubt, in tears and despair," he added, in a tone of deep feeling.

"This gate should be open," said Agricola.

"It most probably is, as it is inside the walls."

"Let us advance gently."

A few paces, and they reached the gate, which was only closed by a latch.

Dagobert was about to open it, when Agricola said:

"Take care that the hinges do not make a noise."

"Must I push it slowly or quickly?"

"Let me do it," said Agricola.

And he opened the gate so quickly that it made but a very slight noise, but still it was so audible that it was plainly heard in the silence of the night, during one of the quieter intervals of the storm.

Agricola and his father remained for a moment motionless, uneasy and listening, not daring to cross the threshold of the gate, lest they should not have the means of retreat.

Nothing stirred,— all remained calm and silent. Agricola and his father, taking heart, went into the private garden.

Scarcely had the dog entered this place than he gave every sign of remarkable joy, pricked up his ears, wagging his tail, and bounding, rather than running, he soon reached the open-work door, where, in the morning, Rose Simon had for an instant spoken to Mlle. de Cardoville; then he paused a moment at that spot, uneasy and anxious, turning and moving like a dog who seeks and discovers a scent. Dagobert and his son, leaving Killjoy to follow his instinct, followed his every movement with

indescribable interest and suspense, hoping the best from his sagacity and attachment to the orphans.

"It was, no doubt, close to this grating that Rose was when Mayeux saw her," said Dagobert. "Killjoy is on the track — let him alone."

At the end of a few seconds the dog turned his head towards Dagobert, and then darted off towards a door on the ground floor of the building in front of the pavilion occupied by Adrienne; then, having reached that door, the animal laid down as though to wait for Dagobert.

"There can be no more doubt! This is the building in which the children are confined," said Dagobert, going towards Killjoy; "it was there that they shut Rose up lately."

"We must see if the windows have bars or not," said Agricola, following his father.

They both reached the spot where Killjoy was.

"Well, old fellow," said the soldier, in a low voice, pointing to the building, "are Rose and Blanche there?"

The dog lifted up his head, and replied by a low howl and two or three low barks.

Dagobert had only time to seize the dog by the throat between his hands.

"He will ruin all!" exclaimed the smith. "He has been heard, perhaps —"

"No!" replied Dagobert. "But, doubtless, the children are there."

At this moment the iron gate, by which the soldier and his son had entered the private garden, and had left open, closed violently.

"We are shut in," said Agricola, quickly; "and there is no other way to get out."

For a moment the father and son looked at each other in dismay, but Agricola said, suddenly:

"Perhaps the half door of the iron gate has closed by its own weight. I will run and see — and open it, if I can."

"Go, as quickly as possible, whilst I look at the windows."

Agricola ran towards the iron gate, whilst Dagobert, going cautiously along the walk, reached the windows of the ground floor, which were four in number, two of which had no iron bars. He looked at the first floor, and found it rather high, but none of the windows were barred, so that the young girl who was on that story could, when warned, fasten a sheet to the single bar outside the sill, and slide down, as the orphans did when they escaped from the inn of the White Falcon; but it was a necessary, though difficult, point to ascertain which was the chamber which Rose or Blanche occupied. Dagobert thought that the sister who was on the ground floor would inform him, but then there was also the difficulty of knowing at which of these four windows he ought to knock.

Agricola returned with speed.

"It was the wind, no doubt," said he, "that closed the iron gate. I have opened it again, and fastened it back with a stone; but we must be quick."

"How can we discover which are the windows of the rooms in which the poor children are?" said Dagobert, with a tone of anguish.

"True," said Agricola, "What shall we do?"

"To call out, and take all chance," said Dagobert, "could but give the alarm, if we mistook the room."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" replied Agricola, with extreme uneasiness; "to come under the very window, and yet not know which —"

"Time presses," said Dagobert, quickly, and interrupting his son, "we must risk all, for the sake of all."

"What do you mean, father?"

"Why, I will call with a loud voice, 'Rose!' 'Blanche!' In despair, as they are, I am sure, they are not asleep, but will jump up at the first sound. By means of her sheet. fastened to the outside bar, in less than five min-

utes the one who is on the first floor will be in our arms. As to her on the ground floor, if her window is not barred, she will be with us in a second; if not, we will very soon wrench out one of those iron bars."

"But, my dear father, pray consider — if you call to them in a loud voice — "

"I may not, perhaps, be heard."

"But should you be, all is lost."

"I don't know that. Before they could call their watching men and open the different doors they must pass through before reaching us, we shall be off; and if once we can regain the boulevard, the dear children may be free, and ourselves beyond pursuit. It is a dangerous expedient, but I see no other way. If there be only two men, Killjoy and I will take good care of them should they arrive before we have got the dear girls out; and that once effected, you must hurry away with them as quickly as you can."

"Father," cried Agricola, suddenly, "there is one safe and certain mode of learning what we want to know. According to what La Mayeux told us, Mlle. de Cardoville has been in the habit of communicating by signs with Rose and Blanche."

"True."

"She must know, then, exactly where the chambers of the poor girls are situated, since they answered her signals from their different windows."

"You are right; there is nothing else to be done. Let us go at once to the pavilion; but there again, how are we to distinguish it from the rest of the building?"

"La Mayeux explained all that very clearly. She told me I should be sure to recognise the apartment occupied by Mlle. de Cardoville by its having a painted projection like a sort of awning over the window."

"Then hasten with all speed. You will have little difficulty in breaking through the gate of separation between the two gardens. Have you got the iron bar?"

"Yes, here it is."

"Let us be off then — there is not a minute to lose."

Proceeding with rapid pace towards the slight division between the gardens already alluded to, Agricola tore out two or three planks from the lower part of the gate, leaving an opening through which a person might easily pass.

"Do you stay there, father, and keep close watch," said Agricola, entering into the garden of Doctor Baleinier.

The window indicated by La Mayeux was easily recognised. It was both high and large, surrounded by a sort of projection, or awning, for it had once been a door, walled up at an after period to nearly a third of its height, and was well defended from all chance of ingress or egress by thick bars of iron. The rain had now quite ceased, and the moon, breaking from the dense clouds which had previously obscured it, shone clearly and resplendently on the whole of the pavilion. As Agricola approached the window, he found the whole of the chamber which it belonged to plunged in darkness, but a bright light was visible through a half closed door at the extremity of the apartment.

Trusting that Mlle. de Cardoville had not yet retired to rest, the smith ventured to tap lightly against the window-panes. In an instant the door from within was thrown open its full width, and Mlle. de Cardoville, who had not thought of preparing for the night, entered the apartment, dressed precisely as she had been during her conversation with La Mayeux. The light which Adrienne carried in her hand revealed at once the enchanting sweetness of her countenance, as well as the surprise and alarm depicted on it. Placing her candle on the table, Adrienne appeared to listen attentively while she slowly and cautiously advanced towards the window, when suddenly perceiving the indistinct outline of a man looking through the bars, she involuntarily started and stood still.

Fearing lest, in her first terror, Mlle. de Cardoville might return to seek refuge in the inner chamber, Agricola again tapped on the glass, and, at the risk of being heard from without, he exclaimed:

"Be not alarmed, mademoiselle. 'Tis I — Agricola Baudoin!"

As Adrienne caught these sounds, she at once recollected her late conversation with La Mayeux, and concluded that Agricola and his father had made their way into the convent for the purpose of carrying off Rose and Blanche. Hastening to the window, she easily recognised the features of Agricola by the bright moon beams, and opened the casement with as little noise as possible.

"Mademoiselle," said the smith, precipitately, "there is not an instant to lose; the Count de Montbron is not in Paris, and my father and myself are here to deliver you from your unjust confinement."

"Thanks, thanks, M. Agricola," said Mlle. de Cardoville, in a voice of the most touching gratitude, "but first think of the daughters of General Simon."

"Be assured, mademoiselle, we are here purposely to effect their release, but we are unable to determine which is their window, and I am come to beg you will kindly assist us to find it."

"The chamber of one of them is on the ground floor, the last on the side of the garden; and the other is situated on the first floor directly over it."

"Then we shall be able to save them!" exclaimed the smith.

"But now, I remember," said Adrienne, "the first floor is very high from the ground. You will find, among the building materials for the construction of the chapel now in process of erection there, some very long poles provided for scaffoldings, which may be serviceable to you."

"That will answer as well as a ladder to enable me to

"HASTENING TO THE WINDOW."

reach the first floor; but now, to provide the means for your escape, mademoiselle."

"Oh, do not mind me! Think only of these poor orphans, for time presses. So that they can but be liberated to-night, it matters little to me whether I remain a day longer or shorter in this house."

"Not so, mademoiselle; it is, on the contrary, of the utmost importance for you to be freed this night. Matters of the utmost importance, of which, I doubt not, you have hitherto been kept ignorant, absolutely demand it."

"What do you mean?"

"I have not time to explain myself more fully at this moment, but I beseech you, mademoiselle, come away this instant. I can easily wrench away a couple of bars from this window. I will fetch my crowbar."

"There is no need; the door of this pavilion is merely locked and bolted on the outside. You can easily knock off the locks and undo the bolt."

"And in ten minutes after we shall be on the boulevard," said the smith. "Hasten, then, mademoiselle, I implore you. Wrap yourself up as well as you can, for the night is very cold, and I will return directly to convey you hence."

"M. Agricola," said Adrienne, with tears in her eyes, "I well know all the risk you are running to save and serve me; and I trust to be able to prove to you that my memory is as good as yours. Ah, you and your adopted sister are noble, excellent creatures; and I feel pleasure in owing you both so vast a debt. But do not think of returning hither till you have effected the release of the daughters of General Simon."

"Thanks to the clear directions you have given me, mademoiselle, you may safely reckon upon our success in freeing the young ladies. I will now hasten back to my father, and return to you immediately."

In pursuance of the excellent advice given by Mlle. de Cardoville, Agricola proceeded to the pile of materials

prepared for the erection of the chapel, and taking up one of those long and stout poles employed in building, threw it easily over his powerful shoulders, and with a light and agile step proceeded to rejoin his father.

Scarcely had Agricola passed the garden gate, in his way to the chapel, which was quite hid in the shadow, than Adrienne fancied she saw the outline of a human form issue from a clump of trees in the convent garden, rapidly dart across the walk, and then disappear behind a high hedge of box. Much alarmed for Agricola's safety, Mlle. de Cardoville ventured to call to him several times in a subdued tone of voice, in order to put him on his guard, but the smith was far out of hearing; he had already rejoined his father, who, a prey to the most cruel anxiety, kept listening first at one window, then at another, in a state almost amounting to frenzy.

"All is right," said Agricola, in a low voice; "here are the windows we want, the one on the ground floor, the other just over it, on the first story."

"Now, then!" exclaimed Dagobert, with a burst of rapture impossible to describe, as with eager joy he ran to examine the casements indicated as being those of his beloved orphans.

"They are not grated," said he, exultingly.

"Let us first ascertain that one of the children is there," said Agricola; "then, by placing this pole against the wall I can easily climb up to the window on the first floor, which is not very high."

"Right, my boy; and once up, you will knock against the glass, and call either Rose or Blanche. When you are answered, come down, and we will place the pole against the window-bar, and the poor girl will slide down, — they are both light and active as young birds. Come, come! Quick! To work at once!"

"And then, father, we will hasten to the deliverance of Mlle. de Cardoville."

Whilst Agricola, raising the pole and placing it

securely against the window-frame, was preparing to ascend, Dagobert, tapping against the window of the apartment on the ground floor, said, in a loud voice:

"'Tis I! 'Tis Dagobert!"

The chamber was, in fact, the one occupied by Rose Simon, but the poor girl, distracted by her separation from her beloved sister, and consumed by a burning fever, the consequences of her mental distress, was far from being able to sleep, and was tossing on an uneasy couch, while her bitter tears bedewed her pillow. At the first sound made by Dagobert, as he knocked against the glass, the poor girl started with a sudden dread, but when she recognised the dear and well-known voice of the old soldier calling her by name, she sprang to her feet, passed her hands over her forehead, as though to assure herself she was not under the influence of some delusive dream, then, wrapped in her long, white dressing-gown, rushed to the window, uttering cries of joy.

But all at once, and ere she could open the window, two reports of a gun were heard, accompanied with loud and repeated cries of: —

"Guard! — guard! — thieves! — robbers!"

Petrified with horror, the orphan stood motionless, her eyes mechanically fixed on the window, through which, by the moonlight, she saw a confused mass of men struggling in deadly combat, while the furious barking of Killjoy almost drowned the repeated cries of "Guard! — guard! — thieves! — murder!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE EVE OF AN IMPORTANT DAY.

About two hours before the facts we have just detailed had passed in the convent of Ste. Marie, Rodin and the Père d'Aigrigny were together in the little room in which we have before found them, in the Rue Milieu-des-Ursins. Since the revolution of July, Père d'Aigrigny had thought it fit to remove suddenly into this temporary abode the secret archives and correspondence of his Order, — a prudent precaution, for he had to fear that the reverend fathers would be expelled by the state from the magnificent establishments with which the Restoration had liberally gratified them.[1]

[1] This fear was vain; for we find in the *Constitutionnel* of the first of February, 1832 (twelve years ago), this:

"When, in 1822, M. de Corbière unhesitatingly destroyed the brilliant normal school which, after a few years' existence, has created, or developed, so many and various talents, it was decided that, in order to make compensation, the Hôtel de la Rue des Postes, in which it was situated, should be purchased, and given to the congregation of the Saint Esprit. The minister of the marine provided the funds for this purchase, and the residence was placed at the disposal of the society which then reigned in France. Since that period it has occupied this abode peaceably, which had become a sort of hotel in which Jesuitism vegetated, and petted its numerous allies, who came from all parts of the country to be refreshed by Père Ronsin. Things were so when the revolution of July arrived, which appeared as if it would disturb the congregation of this locality. Who would believe it? It was not so; the allowance was stopped, but the Jesuits were left in possession of the Hôtel de la Rue des Postes; and on the thirty-first of January, 1832, the men of the *Sacré Cœur* are fed at the expense of the state, and during the time the normal school has no place of shelter, but, unorganised, occupies a dirty hole in a narrow corner of the college of Louis le Grand."

We read this in the *Constitutionnel* of 1832 concerning the Hôtel des Postes. We are not aware what sort of transactions have been going on since this period, between the reverend *pères* and the government, but we find in a public article, recently published by a journal in the organisation of the Society of Jesus, that the Hôtel de la Rue des Postes forms part of the landed property of the congregation.

Let us quote a few fragments of the article in question:

THE EVE OF AN IMPORTANT DAY.

Rodin, still clad meanly, and always shabby and dirty, was writing quietly at his desk, faithful to his humble character of secretary, which concealed, as we have seen, a much more important function, that of *socius;* a function which, according to the constitutions of the Order, consists in never leaving the superior, in watching and spying over his least movements, his lightest impressions, and sending a full account of all to Rome.

In spite of his habitual passiveness, Rodin appeared considerably disturbed and preoccupied, and replied in a manner much more curt than usual to the orders or

"This is a list of the property which is known as belonging to the Society of Jesus:

	Francs.
The house in the Rue de la Postes worth, perhaps	500,000
That in the Rue de Sevre	300,000
An estate two leagues from Paris	150,000
House and church at Bourges	100,000
Nôtre Dame de Vesse, a gift made in 1813	60,000
Saint Acheul, a novitiate house	400,000
Nantes, about	100,000
Quimper, about	40,000
Laval house and church	150,000
Rennes House	20,000
Vannes House	40,000
Metz House	40,000
Strasbourg House	60,000
Rouen House	15,000

"These various properties amount to nearly 2,000,000 francs (80,000*l.*). Teaching is, besides, a very important source of revenue to the Jesuits. The college of Brugelette alone produces 200,000 francs (8,000*l*). The two provinces of France (the general of the Jesuits at Rome has divided France into two conscriptions, that of Lyons and that of Paris) possess, besides, a funded property and in shares in the mines of Austria, more than 200,000 francs a year (8,000*l.*). Every year the propagation of the faith supplies, at least, from 40,000 to 50,000 francs (2,000*l.*); the preachers collect after their sermons 150,000 francs (6,000*l*); alms for the 'good work' bring in an equal amount; and thus they have a revenue of, at least, 540,000 francs (21,000*l.*), and to this income we must add the produce of the sale of works of the society, and the profit which is made by a trade in engravings.

"Each plate brings in, drawing and engraving included, 600 francs (24*l.*), and they may be made to print 10,000 copies, which cost, for paper and working, 40 francs per 1,000. They pay the responsible editor 250 francs, and thus on each 1,000 is a net profit of 210 francs. Is not this a profitable labour? and we may suppose how it extends. The fathers themselves travel for the business, and they could not have more zealous and indefatigable agents. They are always well requited, and will not take a refusal. The editor, of course, is one of them. The first they selected for this post of intermediary was the *socius* of the procureur, N. V. J——; this *socius* had some property of his own, but they were obliged to make him advances for the outlay at starting. When they saw the prosperity of the undertaking assured, they suddenly called in their advances. The editor was unable at the moment to make them good, as they well knew, so they put a rich successor in his place, with whom they could treat on more advantageous conditions, and without remorse they ruined their *socius* by destroying the position for whose permanence they had given him a moral guarantee."

questions of Père d'Aigrigny, who came in at this moment.

"Has anything new occurred since I was away?" he inquired of Rodin. "Have the reports been favourable as they arrived?"

"Very favourable."

"Read them to me."

"Before I do so I must inform your reverence," said Rodin, "that Morok has been here these two days."

"Morok!" said the Abbé d'Aigrigny, with surprise. "I thought that when he left Germany and Switzerland, he received his orders from Fribourg to go towards the south. At Nismes, or Avignon, he might have been a useful auxiliary at this moment, for the Protestants are busy, and there is fear of a reaction against the Catholics."

"I do not know," said Rodin, "if Morok has any particular motives for changing his route, but his apparent reasons, he has told me, are that he is going to give some representations here."

"In what way?"

"A dramatic agent has engaged him and his menagerie, whilst he was at Lyons, for the theatre of the Porte-Saint-Martin, on very high terms, and he added that he could not reject such an offer."

"Well, be it so!" said D'Aigrigny, shrugging his shoulders. "But by the spreading of his little books, the sale of chaplets and engravings, as well as by the influence which, to a certain extent, he might have exercised over the religious and ill-informed population, like those in the south and in Brittany, he might have rendered services which he cannot do in Paris."

"He is down-stairs, with a sort of giant who accompanies him; for, as an old servant of your reverence, Morok was in hopes of having the honour to kiss your hand this evening."

"Impossible — impossible! You know how this

evening is occupied. Has any one been to the Rue St. François ?"

"Yes; and the old Jew guardian has had notice from the notary. To-morrow, at six o'clock in the morning, the masons will pull down the walled-up door, and, for the first time for 150 years, the house will be opened."

Father d'Aigrigny was for a moment lost in thought. He then said to Rodin:

"On the eve of so decisive a moment nothing must be neglected, — everything remembered. Read to me again the copy of the note inserted in the Archives of the Society, a century and a half ago, on the subject of M. de Rennepont."

The secretary took a memorandum from a packet of documents, and read as follows:

"This day, 19th February, 1682, the R. P. Provincial Alexander Bourdon sent the following information with these words in the margin:

"'Extremely important for the future.'

"We have learned from the confession of a dying man, whom one of our Order has shrived, a very secret matter.

"M. Marcus de Rennepont, one of the most active and turbulent leaders of the reformed religion, and one of the bitterest enemies to our holy society, had apparently returned to the bosom of our maternal church, with the sole and entire purpose of saving his property, threatened with confiscation, in consequence of his irreligious and damnable behaviour. Proofs having been furnished by different persons of our society, that the conversion of the Sieur de Rennepont was not sincere, but only a mask for a sacrilegious design, the property of the said sieur, henceforward considered as lapsed, has, on this account, been confiscated by H. M. our King Louis XIV., and the said Sieur de Rennepont condemned to the galleys for life,[1] whence he only escaped by a voluntary death, after

[1] Louis XIV., the great king, punished with the galleys for life those Protestants who, after having often been forcibly converted, returned to

which abominable crime he was drawn on a hurdle, and his body given to the dogs of the highways.

"This premised, we come to the secret disclosed, so excessively important to the interests of our society.

"H. M. Louis XIV., in his paternal and Catholic bounty for the church, and especially for our Order, had awarded to us the profit of this confiscation, in gratitude for our having exposed the Sieur de Rennepont as a relapsed Protestant, infamous and sacrilegious.

"We have learned certainly, that from this confiscation, and consequently from our society, have been excluded a house, situated in Paris, No. 3 Rue St. François, and a sum of fifty thousand crowns in gold. The house was made over before the confiscation, by means of a pretended sale to a friend of the Sieur de Rennepont, whom, being a very good Catholic, we cannot, most unfortunately, punish.

"This house, through the guilty commission of this fraud, which it is impossible to expose, has been walled up, and is not to be opened for a century and a half, according to the will and last wishes of the Sieur de Rennepont. As to the fifty thousand crowns in gold, they were placed in hands unfortunately unknown up to this period, in order to be invested and to accumulate for 150 years, then to be divided at the expiration of 150 years amongst the then existing descendants of the Sieur de Rennepont, a sum which, through such accumulations, must become enormous, and will necessarily attain an amount of from forty to fifty millions of *livres tournois* (2,000,000*l.* sterling).

"From motives as yet unknown, but which he has detailed in a will, the Sieur de Rennepont has concealed from his family — whom the edicts against the Protestants have drawn from France, and exiled to Europe — where he has placed the fifty thousand crowns, impress-

their original creed. As to the Protestants who remained in France, in spite of the rigour of the edicts, they were deprived of sepulture, drawn on a hurdle, and then thrown to the dogs.

ing only on the parents to perpetuate in their line, from generation to generation, the recommendation to the last survivor to be in Paris 150 years hence, at the Rue St. François, on the 13th February, 1832; and that this request might not be forgotten, he has charged a man, whose condition is unknown, but whose description is given, to have made certain bronze medals, on which this desire and this date are engraven, and to transmit one to each person of his family; a precaution the more necessary as from another reason, equally unknown, but which it is presumed the will also explains, the heirs are commanded to present themselves on the day fixed, before noon, in person, and not by deputy, in which case they will be excluded from any participation.

"The unknown man who went to distribute these medals to the members of the Rennepont family is from thirty to thirty-six years of age, of a bold, but sorrowful demeanour, and tall; he has black eyebrows, thick, and singularly marked. He is called Joseph; and it is suspected very strongly that he is an active and dangerous emissary of those reformed and republican madmen of the Seven United Provinces.

"It appears from the foregoing that this sum, confided by this heretic to an unknown hand in a surreptitious manner, has escaped the confiscation which was awarded to us by our well-beloved king, and it is an immense injury, a monstrous loss, which we must seek to recover, if not at this time, yet in a time to come.

"Our society being (to the greater glory of God and our Holy Father) imperishable, it will be easy — thanks to the relations we have established all over the earth by means of missions and other foundations — to follow, from the present time, the filiation of this family Rennepont, from generation to generation, never to lose sight of it, so that in 150 years, at the moment when the division of this immense accumulated fortune takes place, our company may enter into the property which has

been so treacherously abstracted from them, and resume it *per fas aut nefas*, by any means whatsoever, even by stratagem or by violence, our company not being compelled to act otherwise against the future withholders of our rights, so maliciously taken from us by this infamous and sacrilegious heretic, for which end it is lawful to defend, preserve, and recover our property by all means which the law has placed in our hands.

"Until this restitution be completed, this Rennepont family shall be denounced and outcast, like the accursed race of the Cain-like heretic, and it shall be good to keep rigid and unrelenting watch over it.

"For this end it will be requisite every year, from this day forth, that there be established a sort of inquiry in the successive positions of the members of this family."

Rodin stopped here, and said to Père d'Aigrigny:

"Here follow the accounts sent in, year by year, of the position of this family from 1682 until this time. It is useless to read this to your reverence."

"Quite so," said the Abbé d'Aigrigny. "This note quite clearly states the main facts." Then, after a moment's silence, he added, with an expression of triumphant pride, "How great is the power of the association founded on tradition and on perpetuity! Thanks to this note inserted in our Archives for a century and a half, this family has been watched from generation to generation; our Order has always had its eyes fixed on them, following over every part of the globe whithersoever exile had spread them. At length, to-morrow we enter into this vast receipt, so small at first, but which 150 years have transformed into a vast fortune. Yes, we shall succeed; for I have foreseen every contingency. Something, however, occupies my mind."

"What?" inquired Rodin.

"I was thinking of the investigations which have hitherto been made in vain to obtain further particulars from the guardian of the house in the Rue St. Fran-

çois. Has the attempt been once more made according to my orders?"

"Yes, it has!"

"Well?"

"This time, as well as all the others, the old Jew has been impenetrable; he is, moreover, almost in his dotage, and his wife is very little better."

"When I reflect," pursued Père d'Aigrigny, "that for a century and a half this house in the Rue St. François has been walled and shut up, its ward kept up from generation to generation in this family of Samuels, I cannot believe they are as ignorant as they profess as to who are the successive depositaries of the funds whose accumulation has become so immense!"

"You have seen," said Rodin, "by the notes in the ledger on this matter, that the order has been most carefully kept up since 1682. At different periods attempts have been made to obtain some information on this subject, which the note of Père Bourdon does not clear up. But this race of guardian Jews has remained mute, whence we may presume that they know nothing."

"Which has always appeared to me impossible, for the grandfather of all these Samuels was present at the closing of the house 150 years since. 'He was,' says the ledger, 'the man of business or domestic of M. de Rennepont;' and it is impossible but that he was instructed in many points which tradition has, doubtless, perpetuated in his family."

"If I were allowed to hazard a slight remark," said Rodin, humbly.

"Speak!"

"It is but a few years since we acquired the certain knowledge of a confidence of the confessional, declaring that these funds existed, and that they had attained such an enormous figure."

"True! And that called the attention of the R. F. General to the affair."

"We know that, probably, all the descendants of the Rennepont family are ignorant of the immense value of this inheritance."

"Yes," replied Father d'Aigrigny, "the person who has certified this part to the confessor is worthy of all belief. Lately, he received the declaration, but in spite of all the persuasions of his director, he refused to confess in whose hands the funds were placed, always affirming that they could not be placed in more trustworthy persons."

"Then it seems to me," said Rodin, "that we are certain of that which is most important to know."

"And who knows if the holder of this enormous sum will present himself to-morrow in spite of the honesty attributed to him? In spite of myself, the nearer the moment arrives, the more my anxiety increases. Ah," resumed Père d'Aigrigny, after a moment's silence, "what immense interests are at stake, and how incalculable are the consequences of success! At least all has been done that could be done."

At these words, which Père d'Aigrigny addressed to Rodin, as if he had expected his acquiescence, the *socius* did not reply.

The abbé, looking at him with surprise, said to him:

"Are you not of this opinion? Could more have been done? Have we not gone to the very extremity of every possible limit?"

Rodin bowed respectfully, but remained mute.

"If you think that any precaution has been omitted," exclaimed D'Aigrigny, with a sort of unquiet impatience, "say so; there is still time! Once more, do you think that all it was possible to do has been done? All the descendants are put out of the way, and when Gabriel presents himself to-morrow at the Rue St. François, will he not be the sole representative of the family, and, consequently, the sole possessor of this immense fortune? But after his renunciation of our statutes, it is not he,

but our Order, who will acquire his wealth. Could one act better, or otherwise? Say frankly."

"I will not allow myself to utter an opinion on the subject," replied Rodin, humbly, and again bowing. "The good or bad success will reply to your reverence."

The Père d'Aigrigny shrugged his shoulders, and reproached himself for having asked any opinion of this writing machine, who served him as secretary, and who had, as he declared, but three qualities, of memory, discretion, and punctuality.

CHAPTER XII.

THE STRANGLER.

After a moment's silence D'Aigrigny said:

"Read me this day's reports touching the present situation of each of the persons concerned in the affair of to-morrow."

"Here is the account up to this evening which has just been brought."

"Proceed."

Rodin at once read as follows:

"Jacques Rennepont, called Couche-tout-Nud, has been seen confined in the debtor's prison at eight o'clock this evening."

"Then he will give us no trouble to-morrow; after which — but go on."

"The superior of the Convent de Ste. Marie, instructed by the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, has placed the Mlles. Rose and Blanche Simon under still closer confinement; this evening, at nine o'clock, they were carefully locked in their separate cells, and armed guards will keep watch during the night in the convent garden."

"Then there is nothing to apprehend in that quarter, thanks to the precautions taken," said D'Aigrigny. "Continue."

"Doctor Baleinier, acting also by the instructions of the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, still observes the most rigorous surveillance over Mlle. de Cardoville; at a quarter to nine o'clock the door of the pavilion she occupies was securely locked and bolted."

"No need of inquietude there, at least."

"As for M. Hardy," resumed Rodin, "I have to-day received a note from M. de Bressac, his intimate friend, to whose valuable services we are indebted for getting M. Hardy out of the way at this particular juncture. The letter contains a note addressed by M. Hardy to some person in whom he places great confidence. M. de Bressac has, however, thought it best to intercept this letter, and to send it to us as another proof of the successful exertions he has made to serve us, and which, he hopes, we shall bear in mind, for he adds, that in order to serve us he has treacherously betrayed his earliest and best friend, by playing on his feelings, and inventing a false and fictitious case of distress. M. de Bressac doubts not but that, in consideration of his valuable services, you will give him up the papers which place him so absolutely in our power, since their contents are calculated to bring irreparable ruin on the woman he passionately adores with an adulterous love. He still further urges that we should pity the fearful predicament in which he was placed when he had to choose between betraying his bosom friend, or seeing the object of his fondest affections disgraced and ruined for ever."

"These adulterous wailings deserve no pity," answered d'Aigrigny, disdainfully; "however, we will think it over. M. de Bressac may still be useful to us. Now, then, let me see the letter of M. Hardy, this impious and republican manufacturer, the right worthy descendant of the accursed race from which he is descended, this troublesome individual it cost us so much trouble to get rid of."

"Here is the letter in question," said Rodin. "To-morrow we will send it on to the person for whom it is intended." He then read as follows:

"TOULOUSE, February 10th.

"At length, my dear sir, I find a few minutes' leisure to address you, and to explain the cause of my abrupt

departure, which, if it did not excite your apprehensions that something unfortunate had happened to me, must, at least, have greatly surprised you. I have, also, to ask a favour at your hands, and the facts are briefly these: I have often spoken to you of Felix de Bressac, my earliest friend, although a much younger person than myself, yet, spite of this difference in our years, our friendship has ever been warm and sincere; and we have mutually received sufficient proofs of regard to warrant the most unlimited confidence in each other. He was to me as a brother; and you well know all the signification I attach to those words. A few days ago he wrote me from Toulouse, where he had gone to pass some time, in the following terms:

"'If you love me, hasten to me with all speed. I have deep and urgent need of you. Set out instantly. Your sympathy and consoling words may perhaps inspire me with courage to live. Should you arrive too late, then pardon me, and think sometimes of one who was and ever will be your faithful and attached friend.'

"You can imagine the grief and alarm with which I perused this epistle. I sent instantly for post-horses. My managing overseer in my manufactory, an old and worthy man, whom I both esteem and respect, and who is moreover the father of General Simon, finding I was about to go to the south, begged of me to take him with me. It was, therefore, arranged he should accompany me, and remain for a few days in the department of La Creuse, as he was desirous of inspecting some improvements recently introduced in manufactures similiar to our own. I agreed the more willingly to allow him to depart with me, as I could then relieve my overcharged heart by discoursing with him on the mysterious and painful intelligence contained in the letter of De Bressac.

"On my arrival at Toulouse, I found that he had quitted that city the evening previously, taking his

weapons with him, and evidently suffering from the most violent despair. At first I could not obtain the least indication of the route he had taken, but at length, after infinite trouble, I found traces of him, and, after the utmost difficulty, succeeded in discovering him in a wretched village. Never did I see such fearful despair as that which possessed him. There was nothing in it of a violent character; on the contrary, it was an utter rejection of all hope, a perfect despondency joined to a gloomy, sullen silence. At first, instead of welcoming me, he almost repulsed me, and inquired wherefore I had come. Then by degrees, as I soothed and calmed his agitated mind, he seemed to recover himself, and at length threw himself into my arms, weeping bitterly as he did so. By his side were placed loaded pistols. Had I been one day later, who can tell what might have happened? I cannot tell you the cause of all this overwhelming grief, the secret is not mine to divulge; suffice it that I no longer wondered at his deep anguish, his hopeless misery. All I can now say is, that his cure will be long and difficult. He must be tenderly watched, comforted, and consoled. The hand of friendship must pour oil into the wounds of his poor lacerated mind, and whisper peace to his half distracted brain. None but a faithful and attached friend can perform this delicate and difficult task. Yet I am not without hopes of restoring my friend to health, both of body and mind. I have persuaded him to undertake a journey of some length, and to seek diversion and recreation from travelling. To-morrow we start for Nice. Should he find benefit from the excursion, we can easily prolong it, for I have nothing to call me to Paris imperatively before the end of March.

"As for the favour I have to ask of you, it is quite optional with yourself as to whether you comply or not; but this is it:

"It appears, by some papers in the possession of my

mother's family, that I have a powerful interest in being in Paris on the thirteenth of February, and to present myself at No. 3 Rue St. François. I made some inquiries about this; but all I could learn was, that the house indicated, and which was of most antique appearance, had been shut up for the last 150 years by some unaccountable whim of one of my maternal ancestors, and that it was to be opened on the thirteenth of this month in the presence of all the co-heirs or heiresses, if indeed there be any. Being unable myself to be on the spot, I have written to my overseer, a man on whom I can safely rely, and who, I repeat, is father to General Simon, begging of him to leave La Creuse, where he was staying, and depart instantly for Paris, in order to be present at the old house. Not as my representative, as that would be useless, but merely for the curiosity of the thing, and that he might be enabled to give me a full account of all that transpired. In short, to gratify my childish desire to know what this romantic scheme of my old progenitor would end in.

"As it is just probable my overseer may not arrive in time, I should esteem it a great favour if you would inquire at Plessy, whether he has returned or not; and in the event of the latter being the case, may I ask you to go instead of him to the Rue St. François, and watch the curious scene the opening of a house so long shut up must necessarily give rise to?

"Although I am far from thinking I have given up much in abstaining from being in Paris on the day indicated for developing this strange mystery, yet, had I even known the sacrifice to be ever so great, I should unhesitatingly have made it, from a feeling of how necessary were my constant cares and attentions to restore to happiness the man I love and value as a brother.

"Let me, then, again express a hope that you will be present in the Rue St. François, and that you add to

the favour that of writing to me (Poste Restante), at Nice, the result of your curious visit thither.

"Yours, etc.,

"François Hardy."

"Although the presence of this father of General Simon's could not in any way interfere with our plans," observed D'Aigrigny, "I think it would be desirable he should not be present. However, it is immaterial, since M. Hardy himself is safely at a distance."

"We have now only to get rid of the young Indian. And as for him," continued the marquis, with a thoughtful air, "it was wisely done to allow M. Norval to depart bearing the presents of Mlle. de Cardoville to the prince. In that manner, the surgeon, who accompanied him, and who was judiciously selected by Doctor Baleinier, will escape all suspicion of being in our interests."

"Entirely so," replied Rodin; "nothing could be more satisfactory than his letter of yesterday."

"Thus, then, there is nothing to dread from the appearance of this Indian prince," said D'Aigrigny, "everything works as we would have it."

"As regards Gabriel," continued Rodin, "he has written again this morning, urgently pressing for the interview with your reverence he has been trying to obtain for the last three days. He seems to suffer deeply from the punishment imposed on him, of confining him to the house for the last five days."

"To-morrow, then, when he is conducted to the Rue St. François, he shall be heard."

"Now, then," added D'Aigrigny, with an air of triumphant exultation, "we have placed all the descendants of the family, whose presence would ruin our projects, in such circumstances as to render it perfectly impossible for them to be present before twelve o'clock to-morrow in the Rue St. François, whilst Gabriel alone

will be there. Now, then, we hold success within our grasp."

D'Aigrigny was prevented from proceeding further by some one tapping twice gently against the door.

"Come in," cried he.

An old servant, dressed in black, appeared, saying:

"There is a person below, desiring to speak with M. Rodin upon urgent business."

"What is his name?" inquired D'Aigrigny.

"He refused to tell me; but he bade me say he came from M. Josué, a merchant in the island of Java."

D'Aigrigny and Rodin exchanged a look of extreme surprise not unmingled with fear.

"See who this man can be," said D'Aigrigny to Rodin, unable any longer to conceal or endure his uneasiness, "and come and let me know."

Then speaking to the servant, who immediately quitted the room, he said:

"Show him in."

And with these words D'Aigrigny disappeared by a side door, after exchanging significant signs with Rodin. The next minute after, Faringhea, ex-chief of the sect of Stranglers, appeared before Rodin, who instantly recollected having seen him in the Château de Cardoville. The wily *socius* started, but affected to have no knowledge of the speaker who stood before him.

Still bending over his desk and feigning not to perceive Faringhea, he hastily wrote a few lines on a sheet of paper lying before him.

"Sir," said the servant, astonished at the continued silence of Rodin, "this is the person I mentioned as desirous of seeing you."

Rodin folded the paper he had so hastily written, and said to the servant:

"Carry this to its address, and they will send the answer."

The servant bowed and retired. Then Rodin, without rising, fixed his small reptile eyes on Faringhea, and said to him, in a courteous tone:

"May I inquire to whom I have the honour of speaking?"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TWO BROTHERS OF "THE GOOD WORK."

FARINGHEA, though born in India, had, as has before been stated, travelled much; and, having frequently visited the various European establishments situated in the different parts of Asia, had acquired both the French and English languages, and, possessed as he was of uncommon quickness, tact, and intelligence, was more than equal to the most civilised individual, in any matter where address, penetration, or shrewdness were required.

Instead, therefore, of replying to the question of Rodin, he fixed on him a deep and searching look. The *socius*, impatient at his silence, and presaging, with a vague feeling of apprehension, that Faringhea's visit, either directly or indirectly, bore reference to Djalma, he reiterated his previous question, still speaking in a tone of calm indifference.

"To whom, sir," repeated he, "have I the honour of speaking?"

"Do you not recollect me?" asked Faringhea, advancing a step or two towards Rodin's chair.

"I do not think I have ever had the honour of seeing you before the present minute," answered Rodin, coldly.

"Yet I remember you very well," said Faringhea. "I saw you at the Château de Cardoville on the day of the great storm, when the steam-vessel and the three-masted ship were wrecked."

"At the Château de Cardoville? It is very possible

you might, sir, as I happened to be there during the storm you speak of."

"On that day I called you by your name. You inquired what I wanted of you? I told you, 'Nothing then, but much at another time.' Well, that time has come, and here I am to tell you what I wanted with you."

"My dear sir," replied the still impassive Rodin, "before we continue this conversation, which to me is somewhat incomprehensible, I must again repeat my desire to know the name of the individual I am honoured by conversing with. You introduced yourself to me under the pretext of being the bearer of some communication from M. Joshua Van Daël, a respectable merchant in the island of Java."

"Do you know the handwriting of M. Joshua?" inquired Faringhea, interrupting Rodin.

"Perfectly."

"Look here, then," said the mulatto, drawing from his pocket (he was attired in a sort of half shabby, half genteel European costume) the voluminous despatch taken by him from Mahal, the Javanese smuggler, after he had strangled him on the shore at Batavia. These papers Faringhea displayed before the eyes of Rodin, without, however, letting them go out of his grasp.

"That is M. Joshua's writing, certainly," said Rodin, extending his hand towards the packet, which the mulatto quickly and prudently replaced in his pocket. "My dear sir, you must permit me to tell you that you have a most singular method of executing your commission. This letter being addressed to me, and entrusted to you by M. Joshua, you have but to deliver it as —"

"M. Joshua did not entrust me with it," said Faringhea, interrupting Rodin.

"Then how did it come into you hands?"

"A smuggler of Java betrayed me. Joshua had secured this man's passage to Alexandria, and had given

him this packet of writing to go on board with for the European mail. Well, I strangled the smuggler, took his letter, presented myself in his stead on board the ship, and here I am!"

The Strangler pronounced these words in a tone of brutal boasting, his bold, daring glance encountering, with unflinching steadiness, the scrutinising regards of Rodin, who, at this singular avowal, hastily raised his head, as though he would fain read the features of him who exultingly proclaimed his hardy villainy.

Faringhea had expected both to astonish and terrify Rodin by this species of swaggering brutality; but, to his infinite surprise, the *socius*, imperturbable and unmoved as though he had not attached any meaning to the words, merely replied:

"Ah, indeed! so they strangle men at Java, do they?"

"Yes; and elsewhere, too," said Faringhea, with a bitter and ironical smile.

"I cannot credit your words; but I must confess your candour is astonishing. Monsieur — What is your name?"

"Faringhea!"

"Well, then, M. Faringhea, be pleased to tell me what aim you have in this strange conversation? It appears that, by a most horrible crime, you have seized upon a letter addressed to me, and yet you hesitate to give it into my hands."

"Because I have read it, and because it may serve my purpose."

"Oh, you have read it?" said Rodin, somewhat disturbed; then added, "Why, certainly, after the somewhat unusual manner in which you became possessed of the letter, one ought not to expect you would be very ceremonious in other respects. And may I inquire what you found in the contents of this letter that you presume you shall find useful?"

"Why, I learnt, brother, that you, like myself, are a son of the 'good work.'"

"What good work do you mean?" said Rodin, greatly astonished.

Faringhea, in a tone of biting sarcasm, answered:

"Why, M. Joshua says, in his letter:

"'Obedience and courage, secrecy and patience, cunning and audacity, union and universal accord among us, who have the universe for our country, our Order for our family, and Rome for our queen.'"

"It is quite possible M. Joshua may so have expressed himself; but what conclusion do you draw from these words?"

"Why, our 'Order' has also, like yours, brother, the whole world for its country. Like you, our accomplices are our family; and for our queen we have Bohwanie."

"I have not the pleasure of knowing that saint," said Rodin, with affected humility.

"She is our Rome," returned the Strangler. "Joshua speaks of other members of your 'work,' who, scattered over the globe, labour for the glory of Rome, your queen. Well, so have we got members of our 'work' labouring in various lands for the glory of Bohwanie!"

"And who are these sons of Bohwanie, M. Faringhea?"

"Men resolute, audacious, patient, wary, and unflinching; who, to promote the 'good work,' are ready to sacrifice father, mother, brother, and sister, and to regard as enemies all those whose creed differs from their own."

"There appears to me much that is good and praiseworthy in the persevering and exclusive spirit of this 'work,'" said Rodin, with an air of counterfeited humility and modesty; "it remains only to know what is the proposed end."

"Why, brother, we do as you do,—we make corpses!"

"Corpses!" exclaimed Rodin.

"Why, yes!" cried Faringhea. "Does not M. Joshua say in his letter to you, 'The greatest glory our Order can achieve is to make man as it were a corpse!'[1] Our sect also makes corpses of men. Dead men are sweet in the eyes of Bohwanie."

"But, M. Faringhea," cried Rodin, "M. Joshua speaks figuratively of the mind, the will, the thought, all of which should be repressed and subjected by discipline."

"True, your Order kills men's souls; ours only destroys their body. But come, brother, your hand, — we are all hunters of men!"

"But, once again," said Rodin, "I repeat, we aim at no man's life. 'Tis the will and the thought that are referred to in the words you have quoted."

"And what are men, when deprived of the free exercise of thought and will, unless it be corpses? Come, come, brother, you must confess that the lump of clay left after the application of our cord is not more cold or inanimate than the beings your discipline has deprived of thought or free will. Come, brother, own the truth; there is no shirking the fact that Rome and Bohwanie are sisters."

Spite of his apparent calm, it was not without excessive alarm that Rodin saw a wretched and unprincipled creature like Faringhea the possessor of a long letter from Joshua, which most certainly referred to Djalma. True, Rodin believed he had made it utterly impossible for the young Indian to be in Paris by the following morning; but, ignorant what understanding might have been established between the prince and the mulatto since the shipwreck, he could but regard the latter as a person who might probably be extremely dangerous. But in proportion as the *socius* was internally agitated and

[1] We must remind our readers that the doctrine of passive and absolute obedience, which formed the stronghold of the company of Jesus, was comprised in those terrible words, uttered by the dying Loyola, "Let each member of the Order be in the hands of his superiors but as a living carcass — *cadaver perindé ac cadaver!*"

uneasy, the more did he strive to assume a cool and even contemptuous manner towards Faringhea; he contented himself with replying, in a tone of disdainful calmness:

"Your comparison between Rome and Bohwanie is, no doubt, very striking and apposite; but still, I do not perceive what it tends to prove."

"I wish, brother, to show you not only what I am," said Faringhea, "but of what I am capable, in order to convince you how much better worth your while it will be to have me for your friend than your enemy."

"In other words," said Rodin, with contemptuous irony, "you belong to a murderous sect in India, and you seek by a flimsy fable to intimidate me by alluding to the fate of the man from whom you stole a packet of letters addressed to me. Permit me, in my turn, to inform you, with all possible deference, M. Faringhea, that we do not strangle people here; and that, if you have any notion of making corpses in honour of your Queen Bohwanie, why, that you will just have your head cut off for the sake of another deity commonly called Justice."

"And suppose I were to attempt to poison any one, what would that same deity do to me then?"

"I would humbly beg leave to observe to you, M. Faringhea, that I have not the leisure to instruct you in our whole code of criminal jurisprudence; but, take my advice, and carefully resist every temptation either to strangle or poison any one. And, once for all, will you, or will you not, give me that letter of M. Joshua's?"

"You mean those relative to Prince Djalma, I suppose?" said the mulatto, looking piercingly and fixedly at Rodin, who, spite of the alarm and uneasiness he felt, constrained himself sufficiently to say, in a calm and tranquil tone, while his immovable features gave no token of the internal anguish he was enduring:

"Ignorant as I am of the contents of the letters you

withhold, it is quite impossible I can answer that question. I have only to request, and, if needs be, to insist, that you either deliver up those papers addressed to me, or quit this room."

"In a very few minutes, brother, you will beg and pray of me to remain."

"I doubt that."

"A very few words will effect this wonder. When I inquired just now about the punishment for poisoning, it was because I happened to be thinking about your sending a doctor to poison Prince Djalma (at least for a time), at the Castle of Cardoville."

Spite of his habitual self-command, Rodin felt a cold shudder steal over him, as he said:

"I really do not understand you!"

"True, I am a poor stranger, speaking your language but imperfectly; I will, however, try to make my meaning clearer. I am aware, through the letters of M. Joshua, how important it is to you that the prince should not be in Paris, or here, to-morrow, as well as all you have done to prevent it. Now, am I understood?"

"I shall not deign any reply to your question."

Two taps at the door interrupted this conversation.

"Come in!" said Rodin.

"Your letter was sent as directed, sir," said an old servant, bowing respectfully; "and here is the reply."

Rodin took the paper presented to him; but, before opening it, said, cautiously, to Faringhea:

"Will you excuse me a minute?"

"Oh, never mind me," answered the mulatto.

"You are very kind," answered Rodin; who, after having read the letter, hastily wrote a few hurried words at the end of it, and, giving it to the servant from whom he had received it, said:

"Send this to the same address as before."

The servant bowed and retired.

"Shall I go on?" inquired the mulatto of Rodin.

"If you please."

"Well, then, attend to me," said Faringhea. "The day before yesterday, just at the moment when, spite of his wounds and enfeebled condition, Djalma, by my advice, was about to start for Paris, there arrived a carriage loaded with rich presents for Djalma, the gifts of some unknown friend; in the carriage were two men, one sent by the unknown friend, the other, a surgeon, or doctor, or something of that sort, engaged by you to watch over the health and take care of Prince Djalma, till his arrival in Paris,— that was charitable, was it not, brother?"

"Continue your recital, sir, if you please."

"Well, Djalma set out yesterday. By representing that the prince's wounds would suffer considerably if he did not observe a reclining position during the journey, the doctor contrived to get rid of the person sent by the unknown friend, who at once proceeded back to Paris; and he would gladly have disembarrassed himself of me also, had not the prince so warmly opposed my quitting him that we set out yesterday evening, the prince, the doctor, and myself. When we had proceeded half way, the doctor found it necessary to stop for the night at a small inn. 'We should have abundance of time,' he said, 'to reach Paris by this evening,' — the prince having declared that it was of the first importance he should be in that city on the evening of the twelfth. The doctor had been very urgent to start off with the prince in the first instance. I knew by Joshua's letter how necessary it was for your plans that he should not be in Paris on the thirteenth. Suspicions arose in my mind. I asked the doctor whether he knew you? He faltered, and seemed much embarrassed while answering; then my suspicions became certainties. After we reached the inn, and while the doctor was engaged with Djalma, I proceeded to the apartment prepared for our medical friend; there I found a box he had brought with him,

containing various small bottles, one of them being filled with opium, — that explained everything; then I guessed the whole scheme."

"And pray what did you guess?"

"I'll tell you. Before the doctor retired for the night, he said to Djalma, 'Your wounds are going on well; but the fatigue of the journey may very possibly cause some degree of inflammation; it will, therefore, be necessary for you to take a sedative draught during the day, which I will prepare for you overnight, that we may have it all ready in the carriage.' It was easy enough to see through all this," added Faringhea. "The next day (that is to-day) the prince was to swallow the potion about four or five o'clock in the evening, from the effects of which he would soon fall soundly asleep; then the doctor, feigning uneasiness, would, as night approached, stop somewhere till morning, declaring that it would be fatal to the prince to continue the journey; then, putting up at some inn, would affect to be in close attendance on the prince, taking care to prolong his slumbers till it suited your plans for him to awake. Such was your design, which appeared to me so clever that I thought I would turn it to my own account, — and I have done so."

"My dear sir," said Rodin, biting his nails, "your words are perfectly incomprehensible to me; I understand no more of what you say than if you spoke Hebrew!"

"That is owing to the very imperfect way in which I speak your language. But tell me, do you know the *array mow?*"

"I do not."

"So much the worse. It is an admirable production of the island of Java, so rich in poisons."

"I cannot perceive in what that information concerns me," said Rodin, in a harsh and abrupt tone, the better to conceal the deadly anguish he was mentally suffering.

"You will find it concerns you a great deal," replied

Faringhea. "We children of Bohwanie have an extreme horror of shedding blood, and when we mean to tie the fatal cord around the neck of our victims, we always wait till they are soundly asleep. When their slumber does not appear to us sufficiently profound, we augment it at will. We are adepts in our art, brother; the serpent is not more subtle, the lion more daring. Djalma bears our sacred symbols marked on his flesh. The *array mow* is an impalpable powder; by causing a person to inhale a very small quantity during sleep, or by mixing it with the tobacco a person may be smoking, the victim is cast into a deep lethargy, from which nothing can arouse him. If it is feared to administer too strong a dose at a time, the person may be made to inspire it several times during his sleep, and may thus be kept in his lethargic state, without danger, for the utmost period a man can be kept without eating or drinking, — perhaps from thirty to forty hours. You see, now, how gross is the use of opium after the virtues of this divine narcotic. I had brought with me a certain quantity from Java, just out of mere curiosity, without omitting to bring its antidote also."

"Oh, then, there is an antidote?" asked Rodin, mechanically.

"To be sure there is; a plant just as unlike the poison itself, as there are persons in the world unlike you and I, brother of the 'good work.' The Javanese call the juice of this root the *towbac*, because it instantly dissipates the drowsiness caused by the *array mow*, as the sun disperses the thick misty clouds. Now, being quite certain yesterday evening of the projects of your emissary against Djalma, I waited till the doctor was asleep in his bed, then I crawled into his chamber, and administered to him such a dose of *array mow* that he must be sound enough asleep now."

"Wretch!" exclaimed Rodin, more and more alarmed at this recital, for Faringhea had aimed a dangerous blow

against the machinations of the *socius* and his friends — "wretch, do you not fear poisoning the man?"

"No more, brother, than he feared poisoning Djalma. This morning, therefore, we started, leaving your doctor at the inn plunged in a deep lethargic sleep; I was, therefore, alone in the carriage with Djalma, who, like a true Indian, was solacing himself with smoking. A few particles of the *array mow*, mixed by me among the tobacco with which I had filled his long pipe, soon rendered him drowsy; a second adroitly administered dose produced a heavy, trance-like sleep, and he is at this moment at the inn where we stopped. Now, brother, it depends on me to leave Djalma plunged in his lethargy, which will last till to-morrow evening, or to rouse him from it in an instant. So that you see it rests with me, according as you accede or not to my demands, whether Djalma shall or shall not be at No. 3 Rue St. François to-morrow."

Thus saying, Faringhea drew from his pocket the medal of Djalma, and, showing it to Rodin, said:

"You see I am speaking the truth. While the prince slept, I took from him this medal, the only direction he has to the place he should be in to-morrow. I finish, therefore, where I began, by saying, 'Brother, I come to ask much of you!'"

For the last several minutes Rodin had been, as was his wont when suffering with intense anxiety, and compelled to suppress all external evidence of it, biting his nails till the blood flowed.

At this instant the bell of the porter's lodge was rung three times, a peculiar sort of interval being observed between each sound.

Although Rodin affected to pay no attention to the noise, yet a gleam of malignant triumph sparkled in his small reptile-like eye; while Faringhea, with folded arms, stood looking at him with a half scornful and half triumphant expression of countenance.

"So, M. Faringhea, you have related some very mar-

vellous histories; the only point is, do you suppose I am child enough to believe them?"

Astonished, even in spite of his natural assurance, the mulatto started back at these words.

"What, sir!" continued Rodin, "you come here in a respectable house, and boast of having feloniously obtained private letters, — strangled one man, and poisoned another with a deadly drug! You are most probably some unfortunate creature whose brains and memory alike play him false. I have heard you thus long, because I wished to see how far your audacity would lead you; for certainly no one but a shameless villain would come here, and, before a perfect stranger, boast of deeds so monstrous, so diabolical, as those you have been relating. However, I have too much of Christian charity to believe your exploits, infamous as they are in relation, have ever had any other existence than in your own imagination."

Pronouncing these words with a degree of animation far from usual with him, Rodin arose from his chair, and by degrees approached the fireplace, while Faringhea, still under the influence of his first surprise, kept watching him in mute astonishment. Recovering himself by means of natural impudence, he said, at length, in a half sullen, half brutal tone:

"Have a care, brother, that you do not compel me to prove to you the truth of my words."

"Come, come, my good sir, you must have come from the Antipodes themselves, to believe the French are a nation quite so easily duped. You say you have the wiliness of the serpent, and the courage of the lion. I know nothing of your being a courageous lion, but as for your being a wily serpent I deny that you are so. What! you have about you a letter from M. Joshua, which may involve me in serious consequences (admitting that all you have been saying is anything more than a fable), while Prince Djalma is plunged in a stupor none but you can recover him from? You assert you can also

strike a blow which will most fatally affect my interests, and you do not reflect, most terrible lion and subtlest of serpents, that all I require is to gain twenty-four hours of time. Then, you are here just arrived from the remotest parts of India, a stranger to Paris, and yourself alike unknown to every one, evidently taking me for as great a villain as yourself, since you style me 'brother!' and yet it never occurs to you that you have placed yourself entirely in my power, — that the house you have chosen to enter is a lone one, the street perfectly solitary. What is to prevent my immediately summoning three or four persons capable of binding you hand and foot, strangler as you are? And with one motion of my hand," said Rodin, deliberately touching the bell-rope, "this might be achieved. Do not be alarmed," continued he, with a diabolical smile, as he perceived Faringhea make a sudden start expressive of the surprise and terror he experienced. "Do you suppose I should waste my time in telling you all this if I really intended to act as I have described? Now, suppose I were to have you bound and gagged, and in that state placed in some secure confinement for the next twenty-four hours; then tell me, how could you hurt me, or interrupt my plans? What would be easier than for me to seize upon the letters of Joshua as well as the medal of Djalma, who, sleeping under the effect of your powerful drug, could not possibly give me any annoyance? You see, therefore, that your schemes have failed, and that your menaces are useless and impotent, simply because I know them to be based in falsehood, and because I feel perfectly assured Prince Djalma is not in your power as you say he is. Begone, then! Quit this place; and another time when you are seeking for dupes make a better choice than you have done on the present occasion."

Faringhea stood mute and motionless with astonishment; the words he had just heard carried conviction with them. It was true Rodin had him entirely at his

mercy, and might easily cause the papers and medal to be taken from him, and, by detaining him a prisoner, render it impossible to awaken Prince Djalma; yet, with all this power in his hands, Rodin evinced no anxiety to detain him, but, on the contrary, bade him leave the place; the whole thing was past the comprehension of the mulatto.

After in vain puzzling his imagination for the cause of this inexplicable conduct, the Strangler came at length to the conclusion that no doubt, spite of the proofs he had produced of his sincerity, Rodin utterly disbelieved what he had said relative to Djalma; being in his power, such impression would fully account for the disdainful contempt manifested by the correspondent of M. Joshua.

Rodin was playing a deep and hazardous game, and, while feigning to mutter to himself words and threats likely to intimidate the mulatto, he still, while assuming a wrathful and offended air, stole furtive glances at his companion, and from the corners of his scowling eye perused in agonising anxiety the emotions depicted in the countenance of Faringhea, who, feeling quite sure of having penetrated to the secret motives of Rodin's behaviour, said:

"Well, I go — but one word first. You think I am uttering a lie?"

"I am convinced of it; you have been trying to deceive me by a tissue of romancing falsehoods. I have already lost too much time in listening to you, excuse me from hearing any more — it is late — I wish to be alone. Once more, I bid you begone!"

"One minute! — you are a man, I perceive," said Faringhea, "from whom it is useless to conceal anything. I have nothing to hope or expect from Djalma but charity or sovereign contempt, for to say to a person of his character and high sense of honour, 'Reward me largely, because when I had it in my power to betray

you I did not do so,' would be to incur both his anger and contempt. I might have killed him twenty times, but his hour is not yet come," continued the Strangler, in a gloomy tone, "and to await that day, and many others equally fatal, I must have gold, much gold; you alone can pay me the price of my treachery to Djalma, because you alone will profit by it. You refuse to listen to me because you look upon me as an impostor and as one who speaks lies. Look here, this is the address of the inn we are staying at, which I took the precaution to write down; send some one to the place to ascertain how far I have asserted the truth, — you will believe me then. But the price I demand for my treachery will be a great one. I told you, you know, brother, I should ask much of you."

With these words Faringhea offered a written address to Rodin, but, although following from the corner of his eye every movement of the mulatto, the *socius* feigned to be so entirely lost in thought as not to hear him, and, therefore, made no reply to this speech.

"Take this address," persisted Faringhea, "and satisfy yourself as to whether I speak truth or falsehood, — here, take the paper," continued he, again presenting the address to Rodin.

"I beg your pardon," said the latter, affecting to be roused suddenly from his fit of abstraction, "did you make any observation? I really did not hear you; what were you saying?" continued he, casting a side glance at the paper until he had made himself master of its contents, although his fingers made no effort to touch it.

"Read this address," repeated the mulatto, "that you may be well convinced —"

"Upon my word, sir," cried Rodin, indignantly putting back the offered paper, "your impudence passes all belief! I tell you again, and for the last time, I neither know nor wish to know anything of you or about you,

any more than I am acquainted with this Prince Djalma you talk about, although I must candidly state my disbelief of there being such a person in existence. You have it in your power to injure me, you say; I beg you will stand upon no ceremony, but precisely follow up your own inclinations in the matter. One thing I beg of you, and that is for the love of Heaven quit this room, and thereby free me from any further endurance of your company." So saying, Rodin rang the bell violently.

Involuntarily Faringhea assumed an attitude of defence, as though he expected to be seized and overpowered. An old servant, with an amiable, placid-looking countenance, appeared at the door in answer to the summons.

"La Pierre," said Rodin, pointing to Faringhea, "show this gentleman out."

Still more and more bewildered at the calm, immovable air and manner of Rodin, the Strangler appeared alarmed and uneasy, and hesitated to quit the room.

"Well, sir," said Rodin, observing his evident perplexity and apprehension, "what are you waiting for? I told you I wished to be alone."

"Then," muttered Faringhea, slowly, retreating backwards to the door, — "then you refuse my offers? Take care, — to-morrow it will be too late."

"Sir, I have the honour to wish you good evening," said Rodin, bowing with extreme politeness.

The Strangler quitted the apartment.

As the door closed upon him D'Aigrigny appeared from the adjoining chamber, his countenance pale and convulsed with agitation.

"What have you done?" exclaimed he, addressing Rodin. "I have heard all, and, unhappily, am but too well convinced the villain who has just left you speaks the truth, — the Indian is in his power, as he says, and,

doubtless, he will return to him to put his threat into execution."

"I think not," answered Rodin, with a deferential bow, his features resuming their usual air of submissive servility.

"What will hinder him from rejoining the prince?"

"Permit me to explain. I recognised this atrocious miscreant the moment he entered the apartment, and before I began my conversation with him I despatched a few lines to Morok, who, with Goliath, was waiting your reverence's leisure in the back room. Afterwards, when I found the turn events had taken, I despatched fresh instructions to Morok, whose reply to my first missive signified his being fully prepared to follow out any directions I might give him."

"And what does this avail since the man has quitted the house?"

"Your reverence will have the goodness to remember that he did not depart till, thanks to my feigned abstraction, I had had abundance of time to possess myself of all I required further from him, namely, the address of the hôtel where the Indian now is. Even had I not succeeded, Faringhea would have fallen just the same into the hands of Morok and Goliath, who were waiting for him in the street a few doors off. Still we should have been greatly embarrassed from not knowing the residence of Prince Djalma."

"Still violence!" said D'Aigrigny, with an air of repugnance.

"'Tis much — very much to be regretted," replied Rodin. "I could not, however, think I erred in pursuing a system hitherto unhesitatingly employed."

"Is that intended as a personal reproach?" said D'Aigrigny, beginning to suspect for the first time that Rodin was not the mere mechanical automaton he had hitherto affected to be.

"Your reverence must be quite assured neither my

duty nor respect would permit me to presume so far," answered Rodin, bowing almost to the ground. "I merely acted so as to secure this man from doing us any injury during the next twenty-four hours."

"But afterwards he will, doubtless, complain of the violence used towards him, and seek redress."

"A wretch like him so loaded with crimes will not dare seek the protection of the laws; besides, what can he urge against us? He quitted this house free and unmolested. After Morok and Goliath have overpowered him, they will bandage his eyes. There is another entrance to this dwelling from the street Vielle des Ursins; at this hour and during the present stormy weather no persons ever pass through this deserted neighbourhood; the blindfolded traitor will be completely bewildered as to the road he is taken or the distance he is conveyed, — he will be carried into an empty cellar, and to-morrow night he will be set at liberty with the same precautions. As for the Indian, since we now know where to find him, it will be necessary to despatch a confidential person to him immediately, and should he recover from his stupor, why, there is a very safe and, according to my poor judgment, a very innocent mode of keeping him from the Rue St. François throughout the whole of to-morrow," said Rodin, humbly.

The same pleasant-looking domestic who had admitted Faringhea, and afterwards conducted him to the door, now entered the apartment, after having twice knocked gently at the door; he carried in his hand a small leathern wallet, which he gave to Rodin, saying:

"M. Morok has just brought this; he came in by the entrance from the Vielle Rue."

Directly the servant had quitted the room Rodin opened the bag, from which he took the contents, naming them to D'Aigrigny as he held them up to view.

"Your reverence perceives," said Rodin, with an expression of meek satisfaction on his cold, impassive

features, "that my scheme has succeeded well; here are the medal and packet of papers despatched to us by M. Joshua. Oh, Morok is a skilful and expeditious ally!"

"Thus, then, we escape another fearful danger," said the marquis; "still it is to be lamented that we cannot accomplish our object without employing such means."

"The blame rests with the wretched creature who made it impossible for us to use any other. I will this instant send some one on whom we can depend to the hôtel of Prince Djalma, and at seven o'clock in the morning you will conduct Gabriel to the Rue St. François; the interview he has so earnestly begged for during the last three days shall take place there. I have instructed him to that effect this evening, and he will attend you there according to your orders."

"Now, then," said D'Aigrigny, "after so many struggles, fears, and difficulties, a few hours only intervene between the present time and the period so ardently expected."

We shall now conduct the reader to the house in the Rue St. François.

Part VI.

"THE THIRTEENTH OF FEBRUARY"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOUSE IN THE RUE ST. FRANÇOIS.

ANY person who (at the period of our history) should chance to enter the Rue St. Gervois by the Rue Doré (in the Marais) would find himself immediately opposite an enormously high wall, built of stones, now black and almost porous with age. This wall, extending nearly the whole length of the street, served as a support to a terrace shaded with trees of many centuries' growth, flourishing in a soil raised at least forty feet above the pavement. Through their thick branches might be discerned the stone front, peaked roof, and high brick chimneys of an ancient mansion, whose entrance was No. 3 in the Rue St. François, not far from the corner of the Rue St. Gervois. Nothing could be imagined more gloomy than the exterior of this house. The high stone wall was also continued in the Rue St. François ; its massive sides were here pierced with occasional loopholes, strongly barricaded with bars of iron. An entrance gate, or *porte cochère*, of solid oak banded with iron, closely studded with immense nails, whose primitive colour had long disappeared amidst the thick coating of mud and rust, heaped on from year to year, terminated in a sort of arched top, and served as the entrance to a large court resembling a vast arcade, so thick and strong were the walls. In one of those ponderous gates was a small wicket, which served to afford ingress or egress to the Jew Samuel, the keeper of this desolate abode.

Passing the threshold of the entrance gates, the visitor

found himself in a species of deep arch, formed by the thickness of the outer walls. In this entrance was the lodge belonging to Samuel, the windows of which opened upon an inner court of considerable extent, terminated by an iron gate, through which a garden was visible.

In the midst of this garden stood a stone mansion, two stories in height, but raised so singularly above the ground that it was necessary to ascend a flight of twenty stone steps (or rather a double staircase) to reach the entrance door, which had now been bricked up for the last 150 years.

The shutters belonging to this habitation had been removed, and their place supplied by large thick sheets of lead, hermetically soldered and secured by iron bars, let into the stone-work, and securely riveted. And still further to exclude both light and air, as well as to guard against every inroad from time or weather, either within or without, the whole of the roof had been covered with thick sheets of lead, as well as the openings of the high chimneys, which had been previously filled up and bricked over.

The same means had been adopted to preserve and enclose a small square *belvéder*, built on the top of the house, the whole of its glazed sides, as well as summit, being covered over with lead, securely soldered down to that on the roof; but, by some strange caprice, each side of the leaden covering masking the windows of the *belvéder*, which corresponded with the four cardinal points, was pierced with seven small round holes, disposed in the form of a cross, and which were distinctly visible from the outside.

The windows in every other part of the house were closely covered with sheets of lead, admitting not the least air or light; and, thanks to the precautions taken, joined to the solidity of the building, it had scarcely required any repairs during the long period it had thus been deserted, while it was more than probable

that the interior would be found as perfectly uninjured by the years which had passed away as the exterior, and the apartments almost as intact as though just quitted by their late occupants. Yet dilapidated walls, worm-eaten and decayed shutters, a roof half fallen in, and windows whose panes were supplied by the thick ivy and other parasitical plants, could scarcely have presented an aspect so chilling, so awe-inspiring, as did this solid stone structure, wrapped in its leaden covering and bound so securely in its hard iron fastenings, looking as though it were one huge tomb.

The garden had fallen into utter decay, and except when Samuel, the keeper of the premises, took his daily round, was untrodden by human foot, and presented, especially during summer, a confused mass of parasitical plants, mingled with weeds and briars. The trees, left to themselves, had grown in wild luxuriance, and interwoven their branches in various fantastic forms; the vines, however stunted themselves, had sent up young shoots, which, at first prostrate on the ground, had by degrees approached the foot of some tall tree, then climbing up the stem, had boldly thrown themselves around the branches, from which they hung in long fantastic wreaths, flinging themselves also across the pathway, and holding the arms of their opposite neighbours in the inextricable embrace of their twining tendrils.

The only means of penetrating this wilderness was by a path kept free by Samuel, in order to admit of his going from the gate to the house, whose broad approach, forming a gradual descent to carry off the water, was well flagged, and presented a walk of about ten feet in width impervious to damp.

Another path around the encircling walls was nightly watched and kept by two or three enormous Pyrenean dogs, whose faithful race had been perpetuated in this house for upwards of a century and a half.

Such was the habitation destined for the reassembling of the Rennepont family.

The night which divided the twelfth from the thirteenth of February had nearly ended.

Calm had succeeded to storm; the rain had ceased; the vault of heaven shone with its many stars; the moon, ere it set, glittered in silvery brightness, and beamed in mournful majesty on the dull, deathlike spot, while its soft rays fell on the threshold of that building no human foot had passed for more than a century and a half.

A bright light streaming from the windows of the lodge announced that old Samuel, the guardian of the place, was up and watching.

Let the reader imagine an apartment of ample size, wainscoted from top to bottom with walnut-tree wood, now reduced from its once rich brown to nearly black by age and service; two half burnt logs of wood lay on the hearth, amidst a mass of extinguished cinders; on the chimneypiece, which was painted in imitation of gray marble, might be seen an old iron candlestick, with a small candle in it, surmounted by an extinguisher; near these lay a pair of double-barrelled pistols, and a small sword highly polished and sharpened, — the handle of the weapon, composed of carved bronze, belonged to the seventeenth century, — while against one side of the chimney stood a heavy gun.

Four stools without backs, an old oaken closet, and a square table upon twisted legs, formed the sole articles of furniture contained in this apartment. Against the wall were arranged in symmetrical order a variety of keys of various sizes, whose form announced the antiquity of their workmanship; each key bore its own descriptive label affixed by a small ring.

The bottom of the old oaken cupboard, which was a sliding and secret one, had been pushed back, and displayed fixed in the wall a large, deep iron box, whose open lid exhibited the wondrous mechanism of one of

those Florentine locks in use during the sixteenth century, which so completely surpassed all modern inventions, as regarded the impossibility of their being broken into; and which was still further protected, according to the custom of the time, by a thick lining of asbestos, kept at a distance from the case itself by threads of gold, which rendered the objects it contained incombustible in case of fire.

A large casket of cedar-wood, taken from this iron chest, and placed upon a stool, was filled with numerous papers carefully arranged and labelled. By the light of a brazen lamp the old keeper of the place, Samuel, sat writing in a small account book, while Bathsheba, his wife, dictated from a ledger she read aloud.

Samuel was about eighty-two years of age, yet, spite of his advanced period of life, a thick mass of gray hair covered his head; he was small, thin, though muscular, and the involuntary impatience of his manner proved that years had neither diminished his energy nor activity, spite of the impression prevalent in the neighbourhood, where he very rarely appeared, and when compelled to do so always assumed that appearance of childish old age which Rodin had described to D'Aigrigny. An old dressing-gown of maroon-coloured barracan, with loose hanging sleeves, entirely enveloped the old man, and fell in long folds to his feet.

The features of Samuel were a pure specimen of the the race from which he sprung; his complexion was pale and sallow, his nose aquiline, his chin covered with a venerable beard, the same colour as his hair; his sharp, projecting cheek-bones contrasted strongly with his hollow, wrinkled cheeks; his physiognomy expressed at once acuteness, intelligence, and sagacity; his large, elevated forehead betokened a mind firm, frank, and upright; his eyes were bright and sparkling, as those of an Arab, and had a look of mingled gentleness and firm penetration.

His wife, Bathsheba, his junior by fifteen years, was tall, and dressed in deep mourning; a flat head-dress of stiffened lawn, recalling the grave style worn by Dutch matrons, gave a look of chastened melancholy to her pale and severe countenance, which must once have possessed uncommon beauty, of a holy and devotional cast; the few wrinkles time had yet planted on her clear forehead appeared as though they proceeded from the contraction of her thick, gray eyebrows, and abundantly testified the bitter load of grief with which she seemed continually oppressed.

At the present moment the features of Bathsheba seemed impressed with the most acute and poignant misery; her eye was fixed, her head bent forwards and drooping on her breast; her right hand, in which she held the small ledger she had been reading from, fell listlessly on her lap, while with her other hand she convulsively grasped a thick tress of jet-black hair she wore around her neck; this plait of hair was fastened by a golden clasp of about an inch square, covered on one side with a piece of glass, beneath which was a morsel of folded linen almost saturated with a deep red colour, resembling blood, that had been a long time dried.

After a moment's silence, during which Samuel continued to write in his account book, he said, while reading aloud what he had just written:

"Per contra, five thousand shares in the Austrian mines, at one thousand florins, bearing date 19th October, 1826."

Looking towards his wife as he completed his enumeration, Samuel added:

"Is that correct, Bathsheba? Have you compared it with the entry in the ledger?"

But Bathsheba heard him not.

Astonished at her silence, Samuel turned to inquire the reason, but, perceiving the deep affliction she seemed to endure, he anxiously and tenderly cried:

"What ails you, wife of my bosom? What troubles you, my Bathsheba?"

"The 19th October, 1826," said she, slowly, her eyes still fixed, and her hand tightly pressing the long tress of raven hair she wore around her neck; "'tis a fatal date, Samuel; oh, most fatal! 'Tis that of the very last letter we ever received from —"

Bathsheba could proceed no further; uttering a deep groan of anguish, she concealed her face with her hands.

"Ah, I understand you," replied the old man, in a voice trembling with emotion; "a father may, perhaps, throw off his sorrows amid the preoccupying cares of the world; but a mother's heart never forgets —"

And, throwing his pen down on the table, Samuel leaned his hoary head upon his hands, while his aged frame shook with the deep internal anguish he endured.

Bathsheba, as though relieved by dwelling on the frightful recollection of her grief, resumed the conversation by saying:

"Yes, that date marks the fatal, miserable day on which our child, our beloved son Abel, last wrote to us, announcing that he had just employed the money entrusted to him to take to Germany according to your orders, and that he was about to remove to Poland, in order to embrace a favourable opportunity that presented itself of making money there —"

"And in Poland," interrupted Samuel, "he died the death of a martyr. Without being able to produce either proof or reason for supposing such a thing — and never was a more false accusation made — he was unjustly accused of having entered the kingdom for the purpose of organising a system of smuggling; and the Russian governor, treating him as all our brethren are treated in that land of savage brutality, condemned him to the fearful punishment of the knout, and that without deigning either to see or hear him. But what would have been the use of hearing a Jew? What is a Jew,

but a poor degraded wretch, many degrees lower in the scale of creation than the meanest serf? Do they not reproach them in that country, and taunt them with the very vices engendered by the servile bondage in which they are held? Who would deem it worth while even to inquire the name of the Jew perishing beneath the whip of the executioner?"

"And so perished our good, our noble-minded, generous Abel, — scourged to death by a common executioner, dying as much from shame at the ignominy cast upon his tribe as from the severity of the punishment inflicted," said Bathsheba, shuddering, as though the chill hand of death passed over her. "With much difficulty one of our brethren obtained permission to inter the mangled remains, carefully cutting off his long dark hair; and this tress of hair, and piece of linen spotted and saturated with the blood of our darling boy, is all I have left to remind me that I was once a mother!" So saying, the distracted woman convulsively kissed and pressed to her heart the mournful relics so piteously described.

"Alas!" cried Samuel, drying the tears which had flowed freely during these heartrending recollections, "at least the mercy of the Lord was shown, in that he took not our son till the task was well-nigh accomplished our family have faithfully performed for upwards of a century and a half, until now our end is almost achieved — our mission ended. What further use can our race be henceforward on the face of the earth?" continued Samuel, with concentrated bitterness. "Does not this chest contain more than royal treasures? And will not the mansion, walled and closed up for 150 years, be opened to receive the descendants of him who was so greatly the benefactor of my progenitors?"

As Samuel pronounced these words he looked towards the house, which could be distinctly seen from his window. Day was just beginning to dawn, the moon had set,

and the *belvéder*, with the roof and chimneys, stood out in bold relief against the star-besprinkled firmament. All at once the old man turned very pale, and, rising from his seat, said to his wife, in a voice tremulous with emotion, as he pointed to the house:

"Look, Bathsheba! See — the seven points of light as they appeared thirty years ago! Look, look!"

And so it was; the seven round openings in the form of a cross, pierced in the lead which covered the windows of the *belvéder*, emitted so many rays of bright light, which sparkled and glittered with distinct radiance, as though some person had ascended to the very roof of the shut-up and deserted house.

CHAPTER XV.

"THE THIRTEENTH OF FEBRUARY." — DEBITS AND CREDITS.

For some moments Samuel and Bathsheba remained motionless, with their eyes fixed in fear and disquietude on the seven luminous points, which shone out amidst the latent darkness of the night from the summit of the *belvéder*, whilst in the horizon behind the house a pale rose-coloured streak announced the coming dawn.

Samuel first broke this silence, and, passing his hand over his brow, said to his wife:

"The grief which the recollection of our poor boy has caused us has prevented us from remembering and recalling to ourselves that, after all, there is nothing in this which should cause us any alarm."

"What mean you, Samuel?"

"Did not my father tell me that he and my grandfather had often seen such lights at long intervals?"

"Yes, Samuel; but they were unable, as well as ourselves, to explain the cause of these lights."

"But, like my father and my grandfather, we may suppose that a passage, unknown to them as to us, serves for some persons who have also some mysterious duty to fulfil in this abode. More than once my father told me not to trouble myself about these singular occurrences, of which he spoke to me, and which now appear again for the second time in thirty years."

"Yet, Samuel, it makes us as much alarmed as if it were something supernatural."

"The age of miracles is past," said the Jew, shaking

his head mournfully. "Many of the old mansions in this quarter have subterranean communications with distant places. Some, they say, extend as far as the Seine, and even to the catacombs. No doubt this house is so constructed, and the persons who come so seldom introduce themselves by this way."

"But the *belvéder* thus lighted —"

"From the drawn plan of this building, you know that the *belvéder* forms the roof or lantern of what is called 'the great chamber of mourning,' which is situated in the bottom floor of the house. As it must be in entire darkness in consequence of all the windows being closed, why, necessarily, a light must be employed for any one to get an entrance into the mourning chamber, — an apartment in which they say that there are very strange and very awful things," added the Jew, shuddering.

Bathsheba looked attentively, as did her husband, at the seven luminous points, whose brightness diminished in proportion as the dawn advanced.

"As you say, Samuel, this mystery may be thus explained," replied the wife of the old man; "and, moreover, to-day is so important a day for the Rennepont family, that under such circumstances the appearance need not surprise us."

"And then," said Samuel, "for a century and a half these lights have appeared several times. Is there, then, another family which, from generation to generation, is devoted like our own to accomplish a pious duty?"

"But what is that duty? Perhaps to-day all will be cleared up."

"It has come — it has come, Bathsheba!" said Samuel, suddenly, and throwing off his reverie, as if he reproached himself with his indolence. "The day has arrived, and before eight o'clock I must have my cash account all arranged, and this immense list of property duly classed," and he pointed to the large

cedar-wood chest, "in order that they may be placed correctly in the hands of those who have a right to them."

"You are right, Samuel; and to-day does not belong to us. It is a solemn day, and one that will be happy — ah, very happy for us! — if, indeed, we could ever again be happy," said Bathsheba, sadly, and thinking of her son.

"Bathsheba," said Samuel, mournfully, and taking his wife's hand, "we shall at least be sensible of the deep satisfaction of having done our assigned duty. Has not the Lord been exceedingly favourable unto us, although we have been sorely tried by the death of our son? Is it not through his gracious providence that three generations of my family have begun, continued, and completed this great work?"

"Yes, Samuel," said the Jewess, affectionately; "and, at least for you, there will be calm and repose united with this satisfaction, for when the hour of noon hath struck you will be delivered from a fearful responsibility!" And, as she spoke, Bathsheba pointed to the cedar coffer.

"True!" said the old man. "I would rather know that these immense riches were in the hands of those to whom they of right belong than that they were in mine; but to-day I shall not remain the sole depositary. I will, then, for the last time, superintend the condition of these properties, and we will check and cast them by my register and the debt-book which you keep."

Bathsheba made an affirmative nod with her head, and Samuel, taking up his pen, gave all his attention to his pecuniary calculations; whilst his wife again abandoned her thoughts, in spite of herself, to the cruel recollections of her son's death, which a fatal period had recalled to her.

We will state correctly the simple, but apparently romantic and marvellous mode by which the fifty thou-

sand crowns, which, thanks to a careful and faithful accumulation and saving, had naturally, or rather forcibly, been converted at the end of a century and a half into a sum much more important than the forty millions (of francs) calculated by D'Aigrigny, who, imperfectly informed on this subject, and reflecting, moreover, on adverse circumstances, losses, and bankruptcies, which for so many years had, as he believed, affected the successive depositaries of these properties, still considered as enormous the sum of forty millions. (1,600,000*l.*)

The history of this fortune, of necessity united with that of the Samuel family, which had accumulated these funds for three generations, we will give in few words.

About 1670, several years before his death, M. Marius de Rennepont, during a journey to Portugal, had, by powerful influence, saved the life of an unfortunate Jew, condemned to the stake by the Inquisition for his religious creed.

This Jew was Isaac Samuel, the grandfather of the guardian of the house in the Rue St. François.

Generous men often attach themselves more closely to those they have obliged than the obliged attach themselves to their benefactors. Being first convinced that Isaac, who was in business in Lisbon as a money-changer on a small scale, was honest, active, industrious, and intelligent, M. de Rennepont, who then had vast property in France, proposed to the Jew to accompany him, and take the superintendence of his estates, etc. The inveteracy and mistrust with which the Jews have always been persecuted were then at their height, and Isaac was, therefore, doubly grateful for the marks of confidence which M. de Rennepont testified.

He accepted his offer, and vowed to devote his existence henceforward to the service of him who, after having saved his life, had faith in his honesty and integrity, though he was a Jew, and belonged to a race so generally sus-

pected, hated, and despised. M. de Rennepont was a noble-hearted man, with strong sense and a powerful mind, and he was not deceived in his choice. Until he was stripped of his possessions they throve enormously in the hands of Isaac Samuel, who, endued with a peculiar aptness for affairs, applied himself exclusively to the interest of his benefactor.

Then ensued the persecution and ruin of M. de Rennepont, whose wealth was confiscated and given up some days before his death to the R. R. P. P. of the Company of Jesus, who had informed against him. Concealed in the retreat which he had selected as the spot wherein he would end his days violently, he had sent for Isaac Samuel secretly, and given him fifty thousand crowns, all that remained of his once extensive property, and desired this faithful servant to make such use of this sum as he could, by saving and placing it out to interest; and if he had a son, to hand down to him the same obligation; and, in default of a son, he was to find some honest relative who would continue the charge, always liable to a certain salary. This trust was to be transmitted and handed down from one kinsman to another until the expiration of a century and a half. M. de Rennepont had, moreover, begged Isaac to be, during his life, the guardian of the house in the Rue St. François, in which he was to reside, rent free, and to hand down these conditions to his descendants if it were possible.

If Isaac Samuel had had no children, the powerful bond of union which often unites certain Jewish families would have enabled him to comply with the last wishes of M. de Rennepont. The relatives of Isaac were attached by his gratitude to his benefactor, and they and their successive generations would have religiously accomplished the task imposed on one of their people, but Isaac had a son many years after the death of M. de Rennepont.

This son, Levi Samuel, born in 1689, had no children by his first wife, but had married again at nearly sixty years of age, and, in 1750, had a son born, David Samuel, the guardian of the house in the Rue St. François, who, in 1832 (the date of this story), was eighty-two years of age, and promised to be as long-lived as his father, who died when he was ninety-three years old. We must add that Abel Samuel, the son whom Bathsheba so bitterly deplored, born in 1790, had died, under the Russian knout, at the age of thirty-six.

Having detailed this humble genealogy, we may easily comprehend that the successive longevity of these three members of the Samuel family, who had been perpetual guardians of the walled house, and who thus united the nineteenth to the seventeenth century, had singularly simplified and facilitated the execution of the last wishes of M. de Rennepont, who had formally declared to the ancestor of the Samuels that he desired that the sum he left should not be augmented but by the simple interest of five per cent., in order that this fortune should reach his descendants free from any usurious speculation.

The co-religionaries of the Samuel family, the first inventors of letters of exchange, which served in the middle ages to transport secretly immense amounts from one end of the world to the other, to conceal their wealth, and place it beyond the reach of their rapacious enemies, — the Jews, be it said, had almost alone carried on the business of exchange and money from the close of the eighteenth century, and they greatly aided the secret transactions and financial operations of the Samuel family, who, in 1820, or thereabouts, placed all this wealth, which had gradually become enormous, in the banking-houses or exchanges of the richest Israelites in Europe. This sure and secret way of doing business had permitted the actual guardian of the Rue St. François to effect, unknown to any one, by simple deposits or letters of exchange, immense investments; for it was

particularly during his control that the sum capitalised had acquired, by simple accumulation, an amount almost incalculable; his father, and particularly his grandfather, leaving him, in comparison with himself, but small funds to manage.

Although the only consideration was to find certain and ready means of employment, in order that the money should not lie idle for a moment, it yet required great financial abilities to reach this result, especially when it was a question affecting fifties of millions; yet this capability, Samuel, who had been well brought up by his father, displayed in an eminent degree, as we shall presently show by the results we shall quote.

Nothing could be more touching, more noble, more worthy, than the conduct of the members of this Jewish family, who, united by the debt of gratitude incurred by one of their ancestors, had devoted themselves for so long a period of years, with equal disinterestedness, discrimination, and fidelity, to the gradual accumulation of a fortune worthy of a monarch, of which they expected no share, and which, thanks to them, would be handed over intact and vast into the hands of the descendants of the benefactor of their ancestor.

Nothing, indeed, could be more honourable for the proscribed man who made the deposit, and for the Jew who received it, than this simple exchange of words, given and taken with no other guarantee than a reciprocal confidence and esteem, when it concerned a result which was only to arrive at the end of 150 years.

After having read his inventory, Samuel said to his wife, "I am certain of the correctness of my totals: will you now check them with your cash-book, which is beside you, and which details the sums which I have inscribed in the register? I will, at the same time, once more convince myself that the title-deeds and papers are classed in proper order in this strong box; for this morn-

ing, when the will is opened, I must hand all over to the notary."

"Begin, and I will follow you," said Bathsheba.

And Samuel read the following account, checking it by his vouchers in the chest as he proceeded:

BALANCE-SHEET OF ACCOUNT WITH THE HEIRS OF M. DE RENNEPONT, AS GIVEN IN BY DAVID SAMUEL.

DEBITS.

	Francs.
2,000,000*f.*, in the French 5*l.* per cent. in inscriptions named, and to bearer, bought from 1825 to 1832 (as by other statements) at an average of 99*f.* 50*c.*	39,800,000
900,000*f.* French 3*l.* per cent. by different purchases, for the same years, at an average of 74*f.* 25*c.*	22,275,000
5,000 shares in the Bank of France, bought at 1,900*f.*	9,500,000
3,000 shares in four canals, and a certificate of deposit of the said shares with the company, bought at an average of 1,115*f.*	3,345,000
125,000 ducats of Neapolitan stock, at an average of 82*f.*; 2,050,000 ducats, at 4*f.* 40*c.* each	9,020,000
5,000 Austrian métalliques of 1,000 florins, at an average of 93*f.*, 4,650,000 florins at an exchange of 2*f.* 50*c.* each	11,625,000
75,000*l.* sterling in the English 3*l.* per cent., at 88 3-4, 2,218,750*l.* sterling, at 25*f.* per pound sterling	55,468,000
1,200,000 florins in 2 1-2 Dutch, at 60*f.*; 28,860,000 florins, at 2*f.* 10*c.* the florin of Pays-Bas	60,606,000
In cash, in bank-bills, gold, and silver	535,250
	212,175,000

CREDITS.

		Francs.
150,000*f.* received from M. de Rennepont by Isaac Samuel, my grandfather, and successively placed by him, my father, and myself, at interest at 5*l.* per cent., with a regular account of each six months as to capitalising the interests, which have produced, as by accounts and vouchers, hereunto annexed, the sum of	225,950,000*f.*	
But there must be deducted, as by details annexed, for losses by failures, for commission, brokerage to sundry persons, and also salary to three generations of managers	13,775,000	
		[1]212,175,000

Paris, 12th February, 1832.

[1] Nearly 9,000,000*l.* sterling British. — *E, T.*

"Quite right," said Samuel, after having examined the letters contained in the cedar casket. "There rests, therefore, in hand, at the disposal of the heirs of the Rennepont family, the sum of 212,175,000 francs." And as the old man uttered these words he surveyed his wife with a proud and exulting look.

"Can it be possible?" cried Bathsheba, struck with astonishment. "I knew that you had immense sums in your hands, but I never could have supposed that 150,000 francs, left for 150 years, could ever have been the sole source of such an enormous fortune."

"And yet so it is, Bathsheba," replied Samuel, proudly. "You may suppose that my grandfather, father, and self have exercised our utmost zeal and fidelity in well placing these sums; and it also required considerable skill and judgment to take advantage of the right moment in which to embark our splendid capital, to keep an untiring watch for the chances afforded by the times, political agitations, and commercial crises; but all this we had great facilities of doing, owing to our numerous business transactions with our brethren in all countries; but never have I or those belonging to me embarked one single sou in any matter that bore usurious interest. Nay, we have scrupulously preferred investing our funds where the profit deducible was even below that usually expected and legally permitted on all loans and money transactions. The positive commands of M. de Rennepont, as received by my grandfather, strictly enjoined this; and I should say that never was fortune more legitimately or fairly acquired; but for this disinterested prohibition, we might, by taking advantage of several favourable circumstances, have materially increased its present amount."

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed the wife, "is it possible?"

"Nothing more true, Bathsheba. Every one knows that in fourteen years a capital is doubled by the simple

accumulation and working of the interests arising at five per cent. Now then, reflect, that in 150 years there are ten times fourteen years — that the first 150,000 francs have been thus doubled and increased. What astonishes you will thus seem very simple. In 1682 M. de Rennepont confided to my grandfather 150,000 francs; this sum, capitalising as I have told you, had produced, in 1696, fourteen years afterwards, 300,000 francs. They were doubled in 1710, and produced 600,000 francs. After the death of my grandfather in 1719, the sum reached nearly 1,000,000 francs; in 1738, to 2,400,000 francs; in 1752, two years after my birth, to 4,800,000 francs; in 1766 to 9,600,000 francs; in 1780 to 19,200,000 francs; in 1794, twelve years after the death of my father, to 38,400,000 francs; in 1808 to 76,800,000 francs; in 1822 to 153,600,000 francs; and now, in adding the interest to ten years, it must be at least 225,000,000 francs; but losses, defalcations, and unavoidable expenses, of which I have given a full and exact statement, have reduced the amount to 212,175,000 francs, in acknowledgments, vouchers, and value enclosed in this chest."

"Yes, now I understand," said Bathsheba, thoughtfully. "But what an astonishing thing is the power of accumulating; and what admirable stores for the future might be formed out of the feeble resources of the present day!"

"Such was, no doubt, M. de Rennepont's idea; for, according to my father, who heard it from my grandfather, M. de Rennepont was one of the greatest and cleverest men of his day," said Samuel, closing the cedar casket.

"Heaven grant that his descendants may be worthy of this almost regal fortune!" said Bathsheba, rising.

It was now broad day. Seven o'clock sounded from the neighbouring churches.

"The masons will soon be here," said Samuel, re-

placing his cedar casket in the iron chest, concealed behind the old oaken cabinet. "Like you, Bathsheba," said he, "I am anxious to know who are the individuals who will present themselves here to-day, as the descendants of M. de Rennepont."

Two or three strokes dealt by an iron hammer against the *porte-cochère* resounded through the house; the angry barking of the watch-dogs, as they replied to this unusual summons, increased the clamour.

"'Tis doubtless the masons," observed Samuel, "sent by the notary, with one of his clerks, to watch the opening of the house. Collect all the keys carefully together; see that their labels are all correct; and I will come and fetch them." So saying, Samuel, spite of his age, nimbly descended the staircase, approached the gates, and having, as a precautionary measure, opened the small wicket, saw three labourers dressed like masons, accompanied by a young man dressed in black:

"What is your pleasure?" asked the Jew, before opening the gates, that he might be perfectly assured of the identity of the personages presenting themselves.

"I come from M. Dumesnil, the notary," replied the clerk, "to witness the opening of the walled-up door; here is a letter from my employer for M. Samuel, the person in charge of the premises."

"I am he, sir," answered the Jew; "have the goodness to put your letter in the box, and I will take it."

The clerk obeyed the directions given; but he shrugged his shoulders at what he deemed an absurd whim on the part of a suspicious old man.

Samuel opened the box, took out the letter, which he carried to the other end of the arcade, in order to be enabled to read it by the better light of day, carefully compared the signature with another letter of the notary's he carried in the pocket of his great-coat; then, as if perfectly satisfied, he chained up his

dogs, and returned to admit the clerk with the masons by the large gates.

"What the devil is all this fuss about?" inquired the clerk as he entered; "why, you could not observe more ceremony if we were entering some fortified castle!"

The Jew bowed, but made no reply.

"Are you deaf, my old fellow?" bawled the clerk in his ears.

"No, sir," answered Samuel, "I am not." Then, with a gentle and benignant smile, he drew the young man beyond the arch under which they were standing, and, pointing to the house, said:

"There, sir, is the walled-up door you must open. You will also be required to wrench away the bars of iron and covering of lead from the second window on the right hand."

"Why not open all the windows?" demanded the clerk.

"Because such are the orders I received, when entrusted with the care of the premises."

"And who gave you these orders?"

"My father, who received them from his father, who was so directed by the master of the mansion. When I shall have ceased to be guardian here, and the property will have passed into other hands, the new proprietor will use his own pleasure in future orders and arrangements."

"All right," said the clerk, considerably surprised at what he heard; then, addressing the masons, he added, "Now, then, my worthies, just come here and listen a bit, — undo that door; and then wrench away the iron and lead coverings from the second window on the right."

While the workmen proceeded to execute their orders under the inspection of the notary's clerk, a carriage stopped before the *porte-cochère*, and Rodin, accompanied by Gabriel, entered the house in the Rue St. François.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HEIR.

Samuel opened the door to Gabriel and Rodin.

The latter said to the Jew:

"You, sir, are the guardian of this house?"

"Yes, sir," replied Samuel.

"This gentleman, the Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont," said Rodin, pointing to his companion, "is one of the descendants of the Rennepont family."

"So much the better, sir," said the Jew, almost involuntarily, struck as he was with the angelic countenance of Gabriel, for the nobility and serenity of mind of the young priest was legible in his look, and on his pure and white brow, already encircled with a martyr's crown.

Samuel contemplated Gabriel with curiosity, mingled with kindness and interest; but, soon perceiving that his silent observation became embarrassing to Gabriel, he said to him:

"M. l'Abbé, the notary will not arrive until ten o'clock."

Gabriel looked at him with a surprised air, and replied:

"What notary, sir?"

"Père d'Aigrigny will explain that to you," said Rodin, hastily; and then, addressing Samuel, he added, "We are rather soon. Can we not wait somewhere for the arrival of the notary?"

"If you will be so good as come into my abode," said Samuel, "I will show you the way."

"I thank you, sir, — most willingly," replied Rodin.

"Follow me, then, gentlemen, if you please," added the old man.

A few moments afterwards the young priest and the *socius*, preceded by Samuel, entered into one of the rooms which the latter occupied on the ground floor of the side of the house which was towards the street, and looked on to the courtyard.

"The Abbé d'Aigrigny, who has been M. Gabriel's tutor, will be here shortly, and inquire for us," added Rodin. "Will you be so good, sir, as to conduct him hither?"

"I will be sure to do so, sir," said Samuel, leaving the room.

The *socius* and Gabriel remained alone.

The excessive gentleness which usually pervaded the handsome features of the missionary and endued them with so much attraction were, at this moment, succeeded by a remarkable expression of sadness, resolution, and sternness. Rodin, who had not seen Gabriel for some days, was deeply occupied with the alteration he observed in him, and which he had remarked in silence during their drive from the Rue des Portes to the Rue St. François.

The young priest wore, as usual, a long black cassock, which rendered the transparent pallor of his features the more conspicuous. When the Jew had left the room he said to Rodin, in a firm voice:

"Will you tell me, sir, now why for several days I have not been allowed to speak to his reverence, Father d'Aigrigny, and wherefore he has chosen this house to grant me this conversation?"

"It is impossible for me," said Rodin, coldly, "to reply to these questions. His reverence will be here shortly, and will no doubt explain to you. All I can

tell you is, that our reverend father has this interview as much at heart as yourself; and, if he has selected this house for the conversation, it is because you have an interest in being here. You know that well, although you have affected some astonishment in hearing the guardian mention a notary."

So saying, Rodin fixed a scrutinising and unquiet look on Gabriel, whose face expressed nothing but surprise.

"I do not understand you," he replied to Rodin. "What interest can I have in being here in this house?"

"Once more, it is impossible but that you must know," replied Rodin, still fixing his eyes on Gabriel.

"I repeat, sir, that I am utterly ignorant of it," he responded, almost hurt at the obstinacy of the *socius*.

"Then what did your adopted mother come to say to you yesterday? Why did you venture to admit her without having first obtained the authority of the R. F. d'Aigrigny, as I learnt this morning? Did she not speak to you of certain family papers found on you when she discovered you?"

"No, sir," said Gabriel; "at that time the papers were handed by my adopted mother to her confessor, and subsequently they passed into the possession of the R. F. d'Aigrigny. For the first time for a long while I now hear these papers referred to."

"Then you pretend that it is not on this subject that Françoise Baudoin came to converse with you yesterday?" replied Rodin, pertinaciously, and laying a slight emphasis on each word.

"This, sir, is the second time that you seem to doubt what I affirm," said the young priest, gently, repressing an impatient feeling. "I assure you that I speak the truth."

"He knows nothing," thought Rodin, for he knew well enough Gabriel's sincerity to have the least doubt after so positive a denial.

"I believe you," replied the *socius;* "but the idea occurred to me when I was trying to seek some motive strong enough to induce you to transgress the orders of the R. F. d'Aigrigny as to the close confinement which he had ordered you, — a confinement which excluded all communication from without. Moreover, contrary to all the regulations of our house, you closed your door, which ought always to remain open, or half open, in order that the mutual surveillance which is prescribed to us may be rendered more easy. I could not account for your severe offence against discipline, but by the necessity of a very important communication with your adopted mother."

"It was to a priest, and not to her adopted son, that Madame Baudoin desired to speak," replied Gabriel, gravely, "and I considered it right to hear her; and if I closed my door it was because she was in the act of confession."

"And what had Françoise so pressing to confess to you?"

"That you will know presently when I tell it to his reverence, if he will allow you to be present to hear me," replied Gabriel.

The missionary said these words in a tone so decided, that a long silence ensued.

We will remind the reader that Gabriel had been, up to this time, kept by his superiors in the most complete ignorance as to the important family interests which demanded his presence in the Rue St. François. On the evening referred to, Françoise Baudoin, absorbed by her grief, had not thought of telling him that the orphans ought also to be present at the same meeting; and, had this occurred to her, the express commands of Dagobert would have prevented her from speaking of this circumstance to the young priest.

Gabriel was thus entirely ignorant of the family ties which bound him to the daughters of Marshal Simon, Mlle. de Cardoville, M. Hardy, Prince Djalma, and

Couche-tout-Nud. In a word, if he had been told, at that moment, that he was the heir of M. Marius de Rennepont, he would have believed himself the sole descendant of this family.

During the interval of silence which succeeded his conversation with Rodin, Gabriel looked through the windows of the room at the masons employed in taking down the stones that blocked up the door. This first operation terminated, they began to loosen and detach the iron bars which supported a sheet of lead on the exterior part of the door. At this instant the Père d'Aigrigny, introduced by Samuel, entered the apartment.

Before Gabriel had turned around Rodin had time to say, in a low voice, to the reverend *père:*

"He knows nothing; and there is nothing to fear from the Indian."

In spite of his assumed calmness, the features of P. d'Aigrigny were pale and contracted, like that of a gamester who is on the point of seeing a game determined on which his very existence depends. Up to this time everything had favored his schemes and the designs of the society, but still he could not think without dread of the four hours which had yet to intervene before the fated hour arrived.

Gabriel turned around, and the P. d'Aigrigny said to him in an affectionate and cordial voice, going towards him, with a smile on his lips, and extended hand:

"My dear son, it has cost me much to refuse you until this moment the conversation you have requested since your return. It has been not less painful to order you into solitude for some days. Although I have no explanation to give you on the subject of the orders I have given, I yet wish you to understand that I have only been acting for your interest."

"It is my duty to believe your reverence," replied Gabriel, bowing.

The young priest felt, in spite of himself, a vague emotion of fear; for, up to the time of his departure for his mission in America, the P. d'Aigrigny, to whom he had made the formidable vows which bound him irrevocably to the Society of Jesus, the Père d'Aigrigny had exercised over him that fearful influence which, emanating from despotism, compulsion, and intimidation, destroys all the powers of the mind, and leaves it inert, trembling, and terrified.

The impressions of early youth are ineffaceable, and it was for the first time since his return from America that Gabriel had met with the Père d'Aigrigny; and thus, although he did not experience any failure in the resolution he had made, Gabriel regretted that he had been unable, as he had hoped, to assume fresh strength from the unreserved conversation he had proposed having with Agricola and Dagobert.

Père d'Aigrigny knew mankind too well not to have observed the emotion of the young priest, and to have suspected the cause of it. This impression appeared to him a favourable augury; and he, in consequence, redoubled the suavity, tenderness, and amenity, reserving to himself, if it were necessary, the power to assume another mask. He said to Gabriel, as he sat down, whilst the young priest remained respectfully standing, as well as Rodin:

"You desire, my dear son, to have an important conversation with me?"

"Yes, father," said Gabriel, lowering his eyes, in spite of himself, before the sparkling and full gray eyes of his superior.

"I have also matters of the deepest interest to tell you. First listen to me, and then you shall speak."

"I do listen, father."

"It is now about twelve years, my dear son," said the P. d'Aigrigny, affectionately, "since the confessor of your adopted mother, addressing himself to me, through

the intervention of M. Rodin, called my attention towards you by speaking to me of the astonishing progress you were making in the school of the brotherhood. I learned that your admirable conduct, your gentle and modest character, your precocious understanding, were worthy of the utmost interest. From this moment our eyes were directed towards you. At the end of some time, seeing that your conduct still continued meritorious, it seemed to me that you deserved a better destiny than that of an artisan, and therefore your adopted mother was spoken to, and, by my interference, you were admitted gratuitously into one of the schools of our order, and thus a burden the less weighed upon the excellent woman who had adopted you; and a child who had already created such exalted expectations received from our paternal hands all the benefits of a religious education. This is so — is it not, my dear son?"

"Perfectly true, father," replied Gabriel, lowering his eyes.

"As you grew up, excellent and rare qualities developed themselves in you, — your obedience, your gentleness, were admirable and exemplary. You made rapid advances in your studies. I was at that period ignorant of the career which you would ultimately adopt; but I was assured that in whatever path your destiny might be cast, you would remain always a beloved son of the church. I was not deceived in my expectations; or, rather, my dear son, you have surpassed them. Learning, in friendly confidence, that your adopted mother ardently desired to see you take holy orders, you generously and religiously responded to the desires of that excellent woman to whom you owe so much. But, as the Lord is always just in his rewards, he has willed that the most touching proof of gratitude which you could give to your adopted mother should be also divinely profitable, since it leads you to enter amongst the members militant of our holy church."

At these words of P. d'Aigrigny, Gabriel could not repress a movement when he recalled the bitter confidence of Françoise; but he restrained himself, whilst Rodin, standing up, and resting his elbow at the chimney-corner, continued looking at him with singular and concentrated attention.

Père d'Aigrigny resumed:

"I will not conceal from you, my dear son, that your resolution filled me with joy. I saw in you one of the future lights of the church, and I was most desirous to see it burn in the midst of our society. Our trials, so hard, so painful, so numerous, you underwent courageously. You were judged worthy of belonging to us, and after having taken, at my hands, the irrevocable and sacred oath, which binds you to our society for ever, for the great glory of the Lord, you desired to answer to the appeal of our holy father, to the souls of good will, and to go and preach as a missionary[1] the Catholic faith amongst barbarians. Although it was most painful to us to separate from our dear son, yet we felt bound to accede to his pious desires, and you went forth a humble missionary, returning to us as a glorious martyr, and we were justly proud of having you amongst us. This rapid sketch of the past was requisite, my dear son, in order to arrive at what follows; for it was necessary, if the thing were possible, to unite still more closely the bonds that join you to us. Listen to me then attentively, my dear son, for this is confidential, and of the highest importance, not only for you, but also for our society —"

"Then, father," exclaimed Gabriel, interrupting the P. d'Aigrigny, quickly, "I cannot — I ought not to hear you!"

And the young priest became deadly pale, and it was evident, from the alteration in his features, that a violent struggle was passing within him; but, soon resuming

[1] The Jesuits recognise in missions only the initiative of the Pope with respect to their company.

his first resolution, he raised his head and gave a steady look at P. d'Aigrigny and at Rodin, who gazed at him mute with surprise, and resumed:

"I repeat to you, father, that if it is respecting confidential matters of the company, it is impossible that I can hear you."

"Really, my dear son, you cause me great astonishment. What ails you? Your features are altered — you are deeply excited! Pray speak, and without fear. Why would you not hear me further?"

"I cannot tell you, father, until — until I have myself also referred rapidly to the past, such as I have now viewed it for some time. You will then comprehend, father, that I have no longer any right to your confidence, for very soon an abyss will, doubtless, separate us."

At these words of Gabriel it is impossible to paint the glance which Père d'Aigrigny and Rodin rapidly exchanged. The *socius* began to bite his nails, fixing his irritated and reptile gaze on Gabriel, whilst Père d'Aigrigny became livid, and his forehead broke out into a cold sweat. He asked himself with alarm if, at the moment he reached the goal, the obstacle would be raised by Gabriel, in whose favour all other obstacles had been got rid of.

There was desperation in the thought, yet the R. P. repressed his emotions admirably, remained calm, and replied, with affectionate unction:

"I can never believe, my dear son, that you and I shall ever be separated by an abyss, if it be not the abyss of grief which I should experience from some severe trial of your health and salvation; but speak, I hear you."

"It is, indeed, some twelve years since, my father," resumed Gabriel, with a firm tone, and becoming bolder as he proceeded, "that by your care I was received into a college of the Company of Jesus. I entered it affectionate, frank, and confiding, and here were all these, the

best instincts of my youth, fostered. Thus, on the day of my arrival, the superior said to me, pointing to two lads a little older than myself, 'Those are the companions you will select, and you three will take exercise together. The rule of the house forbids two persons to converse together; the rule also requires that you should listen attentively to all your comrades say, in order that you may tell it to me again, for those dear children may, without knowing it, have bad thoughts, or meditate the commission of some faults; so, if you love your companions, you must tell me of their improper inclinations, in order that my paternal remonstrances may spare them punishment by preventing their faults. It is better to prevent than to punish.'"

"Such, most truly," said P. d'Aigrigny, "is the rule of our houses, and the language held to all the pupils who present themselves."

"I know it, father," resumed Gabriel, with bitterness; "and three days afterwards, poor, submissive, and credulous infant, I in my simplicity became the spy over my comrades, listening to and retaining their conversation, which I afterwards detailed to my superior, who praised my zeal. What I was compelled to do was unworthy, and yet, God knows, I believed that I was fulfilling a labour of charity. I was happy to obey the orders of a superior whom I respected, and to whose words, in my infantine faith, I listened as I should have listened to those of God. Afterwards, when one day I had been guilty of an infraction of the rule of the house, the superior said to me, 'My child, you have deserved severe punishment, but you shall be forgiven if you can surprise one of your comrades in the same fault which you yourself have committed;'[1] and, for fear this blind obedience, this excitement to informing, based on personal interest, should, in spite of myself, appear hateful to me,

[1] These obligations of espionage and abominable incentives to informing are the bases of the education given by the reverend fathers.

the superior added, 'I speak to you, my child, in the interest of the salvation of your companion, for if he escape punishment he will become habituated to evil with impunity, whilst, in surprising him in his fault, and drawing down on him a wholesome chastisement, you will have the twofold advantage of aiding in his salvation and of removing from yourself a punishment deserved, but for which your zeal in detecting your comrade will obviate the necessity.'"

"No doubt," said Father d'Aigrigny, more and more alarmed at the language of Gabriel; "and, in truth, my dear son, all this is in strict conformity with the established rule of our colleges and the habits of the members of our society, who mutually denounce each other from pure brotherly love and reciprocal charity, and for their greater spiritual advancement, more especially when commanded or requested by the superior for the advancement of the glory of God."[1]

"I know it!" exclaimed Gabriel. "I well know that it was in the name of all that is good, pure, and holy, I was encouraged to do wrong."

"My dear son," said D'Aigrigny, striving to conceal his rapidly increasing terrors beneath an appearance of wounded dignity, "these terms and mode of expression from you to me are, at least, somewhat strange."

At this moment Rodin, quitting his leaning position beside the chimneypiece, commenced pacing the chamber with hurried step, biting his nails, as usual when greatly excited.

"I am pained, my dear son," continued D'Aigrigny, "to be obliged to remind you that you are indebted to our Order for the education you have received."

"Yes, I am not likely to forget it," replied Gabriel. "And what were the results of the evil lessons I received? Hitherto I had become a spy upon those of my own age

[1] These words are copied literally from the *Constitutions des Jésuites, Examen-Général*, vol. ii., p. 29. Edit. Paulin.

from disinterested motives, but by the orders of my superior I had advanced another step in the unworthy task allotted me, — I had become an informer, a treacherous talebearer, to escape a merited punishment. Yet such was my trusting, my humble confidence in the directions of those set over me, that I continued, in all innocence of heart and intention, to perform a doubly hateful part. Yet once, I must confess, tormented by vague scruples, the expiring efforts of a mind whose generous impulses were being stifled within me, I asked myself whether the charitable and religious motives ascribed as the aim of all these mean acts of spying and revealing were sufficient to absolve my conscience from the crime of committing them. I laid my doubts and fears before the superior, who answered, 'That it was for me to obey, not to scrutinise, and that to him alone belonged all the responsibility of my actions.'"

"Go on, my son," said D'Aigrigny, yielding, in spite of himself, to a deep gloom and dejection. "Alas! I was right to endeavour, as I did, to oppose your voyage to America."

"And Providence decreed that, in this new, free, and fertile country, a singular chance should open my eyes as to the past and present," exclaimed Gabriel. "Yes, it was in America that, quitting the sombre abode in which passed so large a portion of my youth, finding myself, for the first time, face to face with the Divine Majesty, in the midst of the immense forests I had traversed, — it was there that, awestruck and overpowered before so much magnificence and grandeur, I took an oath. But —" interrupting himself, Gabriel resumed: "I will speak further of this oath hereafter; but, believe me," added the missionary, in a tone of deep sorrow, "it was a fatal, a miserable day, when I found myself compelled to mistrust and accuse those I had so long respected and venerated. Yes, father, you may believe me," pursued Gabriel, fixing his humid

eyes on D'Aigrigny; "when I say my grief and desolation of heart were not on my own account only."

"I know the excellence of your heart, my dear son," answered D'Aigrigny, whose hopes revived as he perceived the deep emotion of Gabriel. "I fear you have been led astray, but confide in us as your spiritual directors, and I trust we shall strengthen your faith, which unhappily appears shaken, and dissipate the darkness which obscures your view; for, alas! my son, in your illusion you have been induced to mistake some deceitful glimmerings for the pure light of day."

While D'Aigrigny was thus speaking Rodin stopped, took a pocketbook from his pocket, and wrote upon it a few lines.

Gabriel's countenance became paler and paler, while his emotion increased with each word he uttered; for, since his return from America, he had learned to know with what formidable power the sect from which he sought to separate himself was endowed; but this revelation of the past, seen through the medium of a more enlightened present, being the excuse, or rather the cause of the determination so boldly expressed by the young priest to his superior, made him desire, candidly and boldly, to speak out, however great might be the anger he incurred by so doing.

He therefore proceeded, in a voice tremulous with agitation:

"You well know, father, that the close of my youth, that happy period of innocent affection and confiding light-heartedness, was passed by me in an atmosphere of constraining dread and mistrustful espionage. Alas! how was it possible for me to indulge in one moment's burst of confidence or tenderness, when I was constantly enjoined never to meet the eye of the person to whom I spoke, lest they should be able to read on my countenance the impression their words might have made on me, — to carefully conceal my own feelings, while I

scrupulously observed and listened to all that was said or done in my presence? Thus I reached my fifteenth year. By degrees, the very few visits I had been permitted to pay (though always in the presence of one or other of the brothers of the community) to my adopted mother and brother were entirely suppressed, the better to shut my heart against every sweet and tender feeling; dull and spiritless, I remained a close inmate of this gloomy abode, while I daily felt myself more completely separated from the loving, active world I longed to mingle in, and to breathe the free air of unconstrained liberty. My time was divided between a mass of useless, mutilated studies, without either aim or end, and long, tedious hours spent in the performance of religious minutiæ and devotional exercises; but I ask you, father, was any attempt ever made to kindle in our young hearts one spark of Christian love and benevolence by repeating words imbued with tenderness and heavenly goodness? Alas! no. Instead of that blessed command given by our gracious Redeemer, 'Love ye one another,' they seem to have substituted, 'Mistrust, suspect ye one another.' Did we ever hear the slightest reference made to our country, or the preservation of its liberty? No! Oh, no! For such themes would have stirred up our youthful blood, and made our hearts beat with a vigour and animation unfit for such mere icy machines as ourselves to know or experience. To our hours of study and religious exercise succeeded, as the only recreation allowed, a measured monotonous walk of three abreast, — never two; because, with three, a mutual espionage might be carried on,[1] and because between two persons a friendship more easily springs up, and one of those noble and inspiriting attachments might be cemented which makes the world cease to be dreary, and gives

[1] Such is the strictness of this regulation in all Jesuitical colleges, that if three pupils are walking together, and one of the party should quit his companions for an instant, the remaining two are obliged to remove at a distance from each other, beyond the reach of hearing each other's voice; and so remain till the return of the third.

a quicker throb of pleasure to the heart. Heart! What should the mere automata of others' wills have to do with hearts? So, by continual suppression of every fond and generous feeling, I sunk into the mere machine my superiors desired to see me; all feeling seemed stultified, gone! During the last six months I had not once beheld either my brother or adopted mother; at length they came to visit me in the college; a few years back, and my heart would have leaped with joy at their beloved presence, and I should have received them with tears and embraces; but now my eyes were dry, my heart cold and insensible. My mother and brother quitted me heartbroken at the change they perceived in my whole manner; the sight of their deep and affectionate grief pained me, even in spite of the apathetic indifference into which I had sunk, and I even felt horror-struck and alarm at the frigid insensibility I had permitted to take possession of me since I became an inhabitant of this living tomb. Terrified at the change wrought in myself, I wished to escape from the bonds that held me while there was yet time. I spoke to you, father, of the choice of some pursuit by which I might earn my bread; for, during the time of my rousing from the cold thraldom in which coercion and restraint had plunged me, I seemed to hear from afar the hum of busy, happy life, the whisperings of dear and peaceful affections, pointing to domestic joys, the fruits of honest industry. Oh, how my heart swelled at the bright visions thus conjured up, and how I longed for free, unfettered liberty of word and action! How many noble impulses came rushing over my mind, bidding me shake off the mean, unworthy part I was enacting, and rouse myself into the creature God intended man to be when he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life! At last, I felt persuaded that by so doing alone should I ever regain the peace of mind and satisfaction of soul which seemed now to fly me more each day I dragged on my weary chain. I told you,

father, while kneeling before you and bathing your knees with my tears, that I could be perfectly happy if permitted either to follow a military life or that of an artisan; then it was you informed me that my adopted mother, to whom I owed my life (for she found a starving outcast, and, poor herself, divided with me the bread she laboured to obtain for her own child, — the greatest sacrifice a mother could make) — then it was," continued Gabriel, hesitating and looking downwards (for his was one of those noble natures which could feel called upon to blush and experience a sense of shame for the very acts of baseness and dishonour of which they themselves are the victims), "it was then, father," continued Gabriel, with renewed embarrassment, "that you told me my adopted mother had but one end, one desire, which was — "

"That of seeing you take orders, my dear son," replied D'Aigrigny, "since that good and pious woman believed that, by securing your salvation, her own would likewise be assured; but that she durst not ask it of you, fearing lest you might suppose her desire arose from interested motives — "

"Enough, father!" said Gabriel, interrupting D'Aigrigny with a movement of irrepressible indignation. "It is most painful to me to hear you persist in such a misstatement — Françoise Baudoin never entertained such a wish!"

"My dear son," replied D'Aigrigny, mildly, "you are somewhat hasty in your conclusions. I tell you, positively, that the sole thought and desire of your adopted mother was such as I have represented, — that of seeing you enter holy orders."

"Only yesterday, father, she told me all. Both she and I have been mutually deceived."

"Then, my son," said D'Aigrigny, in a stern voice, "it appears that you give the assertion of your adopted mother the preference over mine?"

"I beseech you, father," said Gabriel, casting down his eyes, "to spare me a reply as painful for you to hear as for me to utter."

"Will you then explain," said D'Aigrigny, anxiously, "what it is you mean to — "

He was interrupted by the entrance of Samuel, saying:

"There is a middle-aged person requesting to speak with M. Rodin."

"I am M. Rodin," answered the *socius*, much surprised. "I am much obliged to you for letting me know."

Then, before he followed the Jew out, he gave to D'Aigrigny some words, written in pencil on a leaf torn from his pocketbook. Rodin then quitted the room, not a little disquieted, and wondering much who could be the person who had come in search of him to the Rue St. François.

D'Aigrigny and Gabriel were now left quite alone.

CHAPTER XVII.

RUPTURE.

Pere d'Aigrigny, plunged in a mortal anxiety, had mechanically received Rodin's note, and held it in his hand without thinking of opening it. He asked himself, with alarm, what conclusion Gabriel would arrive at, after all these recurrences as to the past. He dared not reply to his reproaches, as he feared to irritate the young priest, in whose heart at this moment rested interest so deeply important.

Gabriel could not possess anything of his own, according to the constitution of the Society of Jesus, and, moreover, the R. P. had taken care to obtain from him, in favour of the order, an express renunciation of all the property which might at any time revert to him; but the commencement of this conversation seemed to announce so serious a modification of Gabriel's views, with respect to the society, that they might be resolved to break the ties which bound him thereto, and, in this case, he was not legally bound to fulfil any of his undertakings.[1] In fact, the act of donation was virtually annulled, and at the very moment of being so felicitously realised by the possession of the immense fortune of the Rennepont family, the hopes of the P. d'Aigrigny were completely and for ever destroyed.

[1] The statutes formally set forth that the company may eject from its bosom such members as it may consider useless or dangerous; but a member is not allowed to break the bonds which bind him to the company if the latter think it to their interest to retain him.

Amidst all the perplexities under which the R. P. had suffered during the time his hopes had been excited concerning this heritage, none had been more entirely unforeseen, more terrible.

Fearing to interrupt or question Gabriel, P. d'Aigrigny awaited in silent terror the result of this conversation, which threatened so much of ill.

The missionary resumed:

"It is my duty, father, to continue this exposé of my past life up to the moment of my departure for America. You will understand directly why I impose this task upon myself."

P. d'Aigrigny made him a sign to continue.

"Once informed of the pretended desire of my adopted mother, I resigned myself to it at every sacrifice, and I quitted the gloomy walls in which I had passed a portion of my childhood and my early youth, to enter into one of the seminaries of the society. My resolution was not dictated by an irresistible vocation for the church, but from a desire to acquit a sacred debt to my adopted mother. However, the real spirit of Christ's religion is so full of inspiration, that I felt myself reanimated and excited by the idea of enforcing the adorable precepts and example of the Divine Saviour. In my thoughts, instead of resembling the college in which I had lived until then under strict discipline, a seminary was a blessed spot, where all that was pure and invigorating in an evangelic brotherhood was applied to common life; where, for instance, they incessantly preached the ardent love of humanity, the ineffable sweetness of mercy and tolerance; where they interpreted the immortal word of Christ in its most extensive signification, its fullest sense; where, in fact, the mind was prepared, by the habitual expansion of the most generous sentiments, for that glorious apostleship whose aim is to soften the rich and happy as to the anguish and sufferings of their fellow men, by laying bare before them the fearful suf-

ferings of afflicted humanity, — a sublime and holy morality, which none can resist when it is preached with the eyes full of tears and the heart running over with tenderness and love."

As he uttered these last words with deep emotion, Gabriel's eyes were suffused with tears, and his face animated with angelic beauty.

"Such is, in truth, my dear son, the spirit of Christianity; but it must, before all things else, be studied and explained literally," replied Père d'Aigrigny. "It is for this purpose that the seminaries of our company are especially devoted. The interpretation of the letter is a work of analysis, discipline, submission, and not a work of heart and sentiment."

"I discovered that but too soon, father. On my entrance into this new house, I saw, alas! all my hopes at once crushed; my heart, momentarily expanded, soon again contracted, when, instead of the centre of life, affection, and youth, of which I had dreamed, I found in this seminary, so cold and chilling, the same repression of every generous impulse, the same unbending discipline, the same system of mutual betrayal, the same mistrust, the same invincible obstacles to every tie of friendship. Thus, the warmth which had been momentarily excited in my soul was weakened, and I gradually fell into the habit of an inert, passive, and mechanical existence, which a pitiless authority regulated with mechanical precision, just as they would regulate the inanimate movements of a clock."

"Because order, submission, and regularity are the first principles of our society, my dear son."

"Alas, father, it was death, and not life, which was thus laid down in rules! In the midst of this destruction of every generous principle, I gave myself up to the studies of the schools and of theology. Gloomy and sinistrous studies they were; cautious, menacing, or hostile knowledge, which always excited ideas of peril,

struggle, and warfare, and never produced thoughts of peace, progress, and liberty."

"Theology, my dear son," said Père d'Aigrigny, with a stern air, "is at once a buckler and a sword; a buckler to defend and cover the Catholic faith, a sword to assail heresy."

"Yet, father, Christ and his apostles were ignorant of this dark science, and yet at their simple and touching language men were regenerated, and liberty succeeded to bondage. The Gospel, that divine code, is surely sufficient to teach men to love one another. But, alas! far from making us understand this language, they tell us but too constantly of religious wars, enumerating the seas of blood which have been necessarily shed, to be agreeable to the Lord to drown heresy. Such terrific instruction rendered my life still more gloomy. In proportion as we approached the term of youth, our connection with the seminary took a still more embittering character; our jealousies and suspicions were always increasing. The habit of mutually informing against each other, being applied to more serious matters, engendered bitter hatred and deep resentment. I was neither better nor worse than the rest; all broken for years to the iron yoke of passive obedience, debarred from all action, from all free will, humble and trembling before our superior, we alike presented a pale, mournful, and dejected appearance. At last I took orders; and, once become a priest, you induced me, father, to enter into the Company of Jesus; or, rather, I found myself insensibly, and almost unconsciously, led to this determination — I know not how; for so long a time my will had not belonged to me. I underwent every examination; and the most terrible was decisive. For many months I lived in the silence of my cell, observing with resignation the strange and mechanical exercise which you had ordered to me, father. Except your reverence, no one approached me for a long space of

time, — no human voice but yours fell upon my ear. At night I sometimes experienced vague terrors. My mind, weakened by fasting, austerity, and solitude, was then impressed with frightful visions. At other times, on the contrary, I felt a depression, filled with a kind of quiescence, believing that by pronouncing my vows I should deliver myself for ever from the burthen of will and thought. Then I abandoned myself to an overwhelming torpor, like those unfortunates who, surprised in a snow-storm, yield to the bewilderment of the cold, which results in homicide. I awaited the fatal moment; and then, father (according as the discipline ruled it), stifling in my agony,[1] I hastened the moment of accomplishing the last act of my expiring will, — the vow of renouncing the exercise of my own will."

"Recollect, my dear son," said P. d'Aigrigny, pale, and a prey to his increasing agony of mind, "recollect that, on the eve of the day appointed for the taking your vows, I offered to you, according to the rule of the company, the privilege of renouncing your connection with us, leaving you completely free, for we do not accept any but those whose call is voluntary."

"True, father," replied Gabriel, with painful bitterness; "when exhausted, overcome by three months of anxiety and trials, I was utterly prostrated, incapable of motion even, you opened the door of my cell, and said to me, 'If you desire it, rise and go forth — you are free to do so.' Alas! my strength had entirely left me; the sole desire of my soul, deadened and so long paralysed, was the repose of the tomb, and I consequently pronounced those irrevocable vows, and fell back into your hand a very corpse!"

"And up to this period, my dear son, you have never failed in your corpse-like obedience, as it was indeed termed by our glorious founder, because the more

[1] This expression is from the text. It is expressly desired by the constitution that this decisive moment of proof should be exhibited, and then to hasten the pronouncing of the vows.

entire this obedience the more is it esteemed as meritorious."

After a moment's silence, Gabriel continued:

"You had always concealed from me, father, the real ends of the society into which I had entered. The entire abandonment of my own will, which was to be subjected totally to my superiors, was demanded of me for the greater glory of God. My vows once pronounced, I was in your hands but a pliant and complying tool; but you told me that I should be employed in a holy, beautiful, and vast work; and, father, I believed you — how could I do otherwise? I waited, and then a sad event came to change my destiny — a severe illness, caused by — "

"My son," exclaimed D'Aigrigny, interrupted Gabriel, "it is useless to recall those circumstances."

"Excuse me, father; but I must recall everything. I have a right to be understood, and I will not pass in silence over any facts which have disclosed to me the immutable resolution which I have taken to announce to you —"

"Speak, then, my son," said Père d'Aigrigny, frowning and evidently dreading to hear what the young priest was about to relate, whose cheeks, before pale as ashes, were now suffused with a scarlet blush.

"Six months before my departure for America," replied Gabriel, lowering his eyes, "you informed me that I was destined for confession, and, to prepare me for this holy ministration, you gave me a certain book —"

Gabriel again hesitated, and his cheek was still more deeply dyed with red. Père d'Aigrigny could hardly repress a movement of impatience and anger.

"You gave me a certain book," resumed the young priest, making a strong and evident effort over himself, — "a book containing questions which a confessor was to address to young men, young girls, and married women, when they presented themselves at the tribunal of penitence," said Gabriel, shuddering at the recollection.

"I shall never forget that fearful moment. It was in the evening. I retired to my chamber, carrying with me this volume, composed, as you had informed me, by one of our fathers — by a holy bishop.[1] Full of respect, of confidence and faith, I opened those pages. I was instantly seized and overwhelmed with shame, horror, and amazement. I could scarcely close that abominable volume with my trembling hand. I ran to you, my father, accusing myself for having involuntarily cast my eyes over these nameless pages which, by mistake, you had placed in my hands —"

"Again, recollect, my dear son," said P. d'Aigrigny, with a serious air, "that I calmed your scruples by telling you that a priest, destined to know all under the seal of confession, must be told everything, know everything, in order to be able to appreciate everything; that our company imposed the reading of this Compendium as a classic work for young deacons, to the seminarists, and the young priests destined for the confessional."

"I believed you, father; for the habit of passive obedience was so powerful within me, discipline had so deprived me of all power of self-examination, that, in spite of my horror (with which I reproached myself as a serious sin), I took back the book to my chamber and read it.

[1] It is impossible for us, out of respect to our readers, to give, even in Latin, an idea of this infamous book. M. Genin, in his bold and excellent work, *Des Jésuites et de l'Université*, says thus:

"I feel great embarrassment in beginning this chapter; it treats of a book which it is impossible to translate, and difficult to quote literally, for the Latin braves decency with too much shamelessness. I must ask for the indulgence of the reader, and I promise, in return, to spare him as much of its obscenity as possible."

Further, in alluding to the questions imposed by the Compendium, M. Genin exclaims, with generous indignation, "What, then, are the conversations which pass in the confessional between the priest and a married woman? I dare not speak more on this point."

The author of *Découvertes d'un Bibliophile*, after having literally quoted a great number of passages from this horrible catechism, says:

"My pen refuses to set down more amply this encyclopædia of all that is most foul. I have even a remorse, which alarms me, for having already gone so far. I say to myself in vain that I have only copied. I still feel the horror one has after having touched poison. Yet this my horror gives me courage. In the church of Jesus Christ, according to the admirable order established by God, the greater the evil when it is error, the more prompt, the more efficacious, the remedy. The holiness of morality cannot be endangered, but truth will raise its voice and will be heard."

Ah, father, what a fearful disclosure was this of the criminal extent of luxury, so refined in its wickedness! I was in the vigour of life, and, until then, my ignorance and God's help had alone sustained me in my fierce struggles against my senses. Oh, what a night, — what a night, as, in the deep silence of my solitude, shuddering with fright and confusion, I spelled over this catechism of monstrous, gross, and incredible debaucheries! As the obscene pictures of horrible lubricity presented themselves to my imagination, until then chaste and pure, you know my very reason seemed to fail me — yes, and completely left me; for whilst I desired to flee from this infernal book, still devouring curiosity impelled me, breathless and distracted, to peruse these infamous pages, until I thought I should have died with confusion and shame."

"You speak of this work in blamable language," said P. d'Aigrigny, with severity. "You have been the victim of a too lively imagination, and to that you must attribute this sad impression, produced by a work excellent and irreproachable of its class, and, moreover, authorised by the church."

"And thus, father," replied Gabriel, with deep bitterness, "I have not the right to complain that my imagination, until then pure and unsullied, has been for ever stained by monstrous ideas that I could never else have suspected, for I doubt if those who can abandon themselves to such horrors ever come to ask for absolution from a priest?"

"Those are questions of which you are not a competent judge," replied D'Aigrigny, angrily.

"A tedious illness succeeded this terrific night, and often, as I was told, it was feared that my reason was destroyed. When I recovered, the past appeared to me as a painful dream. You told me then, father, that I was not yet fitted for certain functions. It was then that I asked you, with earnest entreaties, to allow me to

go on a mission to America. After refusing my prayer for a long time, you consented, and I departed. From my infancy I had always lived, in college or the seminary, in a state of perpetual restraint and subjection, and by force of accustoming myself to lower my head and eyes, I had, as it were, become unused to contemplate heaven and the splendours of nature; thus, then, what deep and holy joy did I experience, when I found myself all at once transported into the midst of the imposing grandeurs of the sea — when, during our voyage, I saw myself between ocean and sky! I seemed then to have left the thick and heavy darkness, and for the first time for many years I felt my heart beat freely in my bosom. For the first time for many years I felt myself master of my faults, and I ventured to examine my past life, as from the height of a mountain one gazes into an obscure valley below. Then strange doubts arose in my mind. I asked myself by what right, for what purpose, my will, my liberty, and my reason had so long been repressed and fettered down, since God had endued me with liberty, will, and reason. But I said to myself that perhaps the ends of this great, beautiful, and holy work, to which I was bound, would one day be unveiled to me, and recompense me for my obedience and resignation."

At this moment Rodin returned.

Père d'Aigrigny inquired of him by a meaning look. The *socius* approached, and said, in a low voice, so that Gabriel could not hear:

"Nothing important; they only came to tell me that the father of General Simon had arrived at the manufactory of M. Hardy!"

Then, looking at Gabriel, Rodin seemed to inquire of P. d'Aigrigny, who looked down with a troubled air. However, recovering himself, he addressed Gabriel, whilst Rodin again leaned on his elbow against the chimney.

"Continue, my dear son, I am most desirous to know the resolution at which you have arrived."

"I will tell you instantly, father. I reached Charlestown. There the superior of our establishment, to whom I communicated my doubts as to the ultimate aims of our society, undertook to explain to me; and with fearful frankness he did disclose to me those aims to which tended, perhaps, not all the members of the company, for a great many shared my ignorance, but the aims which its chiefs have pertinaciously pursued since the foundation of the Order. I was thunderstruck. I read the Casuists, and then, father, I had a new and fearful revelation, when, at each page of those books written by our fathers, I read excuses for justification of robbery, slander, violation, adultery, perjury, murder, regicide.[1]

[1] This statement is quite within the bounds of truth. These are the extracts from the Compendium for the use of the seminaries, published at Strasbourg in 1843, under the title *Découvertes d'un Bibliophile;* we shall find that the doctrine of the reverend fathers was sufficient to alarm Gabriel.

Perjury.

"It is asked how far a man is bound, who has taken an oath in a fictitious manner, and to deceive?" Answer: "He is bound to nothing as regards religion; because he has not taken a real oath; but he is bound, by justice, to do what he has sworn in a fictitious manner, and to deceive."

Violation.

"He who, by force, threat, fraud, or importunity of his prayer, has seduced a virgin without any promise of marriage, is bound to indemnify the young girl and her parents from all the wrong which may result to them, by giving her a dowry, in order that she may marry; and by marrying her himself if he cannot indemnify her otherwise. If, however, his crime has remained absolutely a secret, it is more probable that, in conscience, the seducer is not bound to any reparation."

Adultery.

"If any one has guilty intercourse with a married woman, not because she is married, but because she is handsome, thus obstructing the circumstance of marriage, this connection, according to many authors, does not constitute the sin of adultery, but is only simple impurity."

Suicide.

"A doctor orders a Carthusian, stricken with a serious malady, the use of meat, as a necessary remedy to avoid certain death; is he bound to obey his doctor?" Answer: "This question has been one of controversy; but a negative decision appears to us most probable; and is, therefore, most general amongst the teachers."

Robbery.

"Robbery is excusable when it constitutes a concealed compensation, by which the creditor carries off secretly the property of his debtor to an amount equal to what is due to him."

Murder.

"It is certain that it is permissible to kill a robber to preserve possessions necessary to life; because, there the aggressor attacks not only our property,

When I thought that I, a priest of God, of charity, justice, pardon, and love, belonged henceforward to a company whose chiefs professed such doctrines and glorified themselves thereat, I took an oath before God to break for ever the bonds that bound me to it!"

At these words of Gabriel, Père d'Aigrigny and Rodin exchanged a look of terror; all was lost, — their prey had escaped them!

Gabriel, deeply moved by the recollections he had awakened, did not perceive this movement of the R. P. and the *socius*, and continued:

"In spite of my resolution, father, to leave the company, the discovery I had made was deeply distressing to me. Ah, believe me, for a just and good mind nothing is more frightful than to have to renounce that which it has long respected, and to sever from it. I suffered so greatly that, when I thought of the dangers of my mission, I hoped, with secret joy, that God would recall me, perhaps, to himself under these circumstances; but, on the contrary, he has watched over me with providential care."

As he said these words, Gabriel shuddered as he remembered the mysterious female who had saved his life in America. After a moment's silence he thus continued:

"My mission terminated, I returned hither, further resolved to beseech you to restore me to liberty, to release me from my vows. Very frequently, but in vain, I have begged to have an interview with you; yesterday Providence vouchsafed that I should have a lengthened conversation with my adopted mother, from whom I learnt the stratagem that had been employed to compel

but indirectly our life also. But it is doubtful if it is permissible to kill him who unjustly attempts to carry off property of great importance not necessary to life, if this property cannot be defended with success. The affirmative appears most probable. The reason being that charity does not require that any one should undergo a severe loss of his goods to preserve the life of his neighbour."

As to regicide, read Sanchez, etc.

me to take holy orders, — one of the sacrilegious abuses which is made of confession by employing it to confide to other persons the orphans whom a dying mother had confided to the hands of a worthy soldier. You must understand, father, that if I could have hesitated for a moment to break my bonds, what I learnt yesterday would have made my decision irrevocable. But, at this solemn moment, father, I must tell you that I do not accuse the whole company. There are many simple, credulous, confiding men, like myself, who are, doubtless, amongst its members. In their blindness, passive instruments! They are ignorant of the object to which they are impelled and instrumental; and I pity them, and will pray to God to enlighten them as he has enlightened me."

"Thus, then, my son," said the Père d'Aigrigny, rising, livid and aghast, "you come to ask me to sever the ties which bind you to the company?"

"I do, father; I have taken an oath at your hands, and I pray of you to absolve me of that oath."

"Thus, then, my son, you understand that all the engagement freely taken in former days by you should be considered as vain and dissolved?"

"Yes, father."

"Thus, then, my son, there will henceforward be nothing in common between you and our society?"

"No, father, as I wish to be released from my vows."

"But you know, my son, that the company may release you, but you cannot release yourself from it?"

"The step I have taken, father, must prove to you the importance I attach to my oath, since I came to you to ask to be released from it. Still, even if you refuse me, I shall no longer consider myself bound either in the eyes of God or man."

"It is perfectly clear," said P. d'Aigrigny to Rodin; and his words expired on his lips, so deep was his despair.

Suddenly, whilst Gabriel, with his eyes fixed on the

ground, was awaiting the reply of P. d'Aigrigny, who was mute and motionless, Rodin appeared struck with a sudden idea, when he perceived that the R. P. still held in his hand the note he had written in pencil.

The *socius* quickly approached P. d'Aigrigny, and said to him, in a low tone, and with an air of doubt and alarm:

"Have you not read my note?"

"I had not thought of it," replied the R. P., mechanically.

Rodin appeared to make a great effort over himself to repress an impulse of violent anger, and then said to P. d'Aigrigny, in a calm tone:

"Read it, then — "

Scarcely had the R. P. cast his eyes on the billet than a sudden ray of hope lighted up his countenance, till then so utterly despairing, and pressing the hand of the *socius*, with an expression of deep gratitude he said to him:

"You are right, Gabriel is ours."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RETURN.

Père d'Aigrigny, before he addressed Gabriel, reflected deeply. His countenance, hitherto so dejected, gradually became more serene. He appeared to meditate, calculating on the effects of the eloquence which he was about to employ on a theme so admirable, and of such certain effect, as that which the *socius*, struck with the danger of their position, had written rapidly with his pencil, and which in his trouble the R. P. had at first neglected.

Rodin resumed his post of observation near the chimney, where he leaned on his elbow, after having thrown on the R. P. d'Aigrigny a look of disdainful and angry superiority, accompanied by a very significant shrugging of the shoulders.

After this involuntary manifestation, fortunately unperceived by the R. P. d'Aigrigny, the corpse-like countenance of the *socius* resumed its icy calm. His placid eyelids, a moment raised in anger and impatience, fell, and half veiled his small, dull eyes.

It must be confessed that Père d'Aigrigny, in spite of his elegant and flowing language, in spite of the attractions of his face and his endowments as an accomplished and refined man of the world, — Père d'Aigrigny was often surpassed and controlled by the pitiless firmness, the devilish cunning and depth of Rodin, that repulsive, dirty, meanly clad old man, who, however, but seldom

quitted his humble character of secretary and mute auditor.

The influence of education is so powerful, that Gabriel, in spite of the formal rupture which he had provoked, felt still intimidated by the presence of Père d'Aigrigny, and awaited with deep anguish the reply of the reverend father to his formal and direct request to be released from his former oaths.

His reverence, having, no doubt, skilfully combined his plan of attack, at length broke silence, and heaving a deep sigh, and giving to his countenance, recently so stern and irritated, a touching expression of tenderness, said to Gabriel, with an affectionate tone:

"Pardon me, my dear son, for having so long kept silence, but your sudden determination took me so utterly by surprise, and created so many painful emotions, that I required some moments to collect myself, and endeavour to penetrate the cause of your desire to sever from us; and I believe I have detected it. Have you, my dear son, reflected well on the importance of this step?"

"Yes, father."

"You have absolutely decided on abandoning the company, even in opposition to my wishes?"

"It will be painful to me, father; but I am resolved upon it."

"It must, indeed, be painful to you, my dear son; for you freely took an irrevocable oath; and that oath, according to our statutes, would enjoin you not to quit the company but with the consent of your superiors."

"Father, I was then ignorant, as you know, of the nature of the engagement I entered into; but now, better informed, I ask to withdraw; my only desire is to obtain a curacy in some village far from Paris. I feel an irresistible vocation for such humble and useful functions, for there is in the country so much dreadful

misery, so much profound ignorance as to all which tends to ameliorate the condition of the agricultural labourer, whose existence is as wretched as that of the negro slave. For, what is his liberty? What his instruction? Oh, it seems to me that, by divine assistance, I could, as a village curate, render some service to my fellow creatures! It would, therefore, be painful to me, father, to have you refuse me what—"

"Oh, make your mind easy, my son," replied Père d'Aigrigny, "I do not propose to contend any further against your desire to separate from us."

"Then, father, you release me from my vows?"

"I cannot do that of myself, my dear son; but I will write immediately to Rome to request the authority of our general."

"I thank you, father!"

"Soon, therefore, my dear son, you will be delivered from those bonds which weigh upon you; and the men whom you differ from with so much bitterness will not the less continue to pray for you, that God may preserve you from any further wanderings. You believe yourself severed from us, my dear son, but we shall never consider ourselves as severed from you. We do not thus rend asunder the ties that bind us in habits of paternal attachment. We consider ourselves as ever obliged to our fellow creatures by the very benefits which we have heaped upon them. Thus, you were poor and an orphan; we extended our arms towards you, as much for the interest which you really deserved, my dear son, as to spare a very heavy expense to that worthy woman, your adopted mother."

"Father!" said Gabriel, with restrained emotion, "I am not ungrateful."

"I am willing to believe so, my dear son. During the long years we gave you, as to our beloved child, the bread of soul and body; to-day you desire to sever from, to abandon us. Not only do we consent, now that I

have penetrated the real cause of your rupture with us, but it is my duty to release you from your vows."

"Of what cause do you speak, father?"

"Alas, my dear son, I can understand your fear! At this moment dangers threaten us — you know that well —"

"Dangers, father!" exclaimed Gabriel.

"It is impossible, my dear son, that you can be ignorant that, since the fall of our legitimate sovereign, our natural supporter, revolutionary impiety becomes more and more menacing, and we are overwhelmed with persecutions. Thus, my dear son, I understand and appreciate, as I should do, the motive which, such being our position, induces you to desire to separate from us—"

"Father!" exclaimed Gabriel, with equal indignation and anguish, "you do not think so of me — you cannot think so!"

Père d'Aigrigny, without any attention to Gabriel's protestation, continued the imaginary picture of the dangers of the company, which, far from being in peril, was already beginning to resume its malign influence.

"Oh, if our Order were as all-powerful as it was a few years since!" resumed P. d'Aigrigny; "if it were surrounded by the respect and homage which the faithful owe to it, in spite of the many abominable calumnies with which we are pursued, perhaps then, my dear son, we might have hesitated to resign to you those oaths you have made, to have opened your eyes to the light, to have snatched you from the fatal vertigo to which you are a prey; but now, when we are feeble, oppressed, threatened on all sides, it is our duty, it is our charity, not to make you partake, by force, of the perils from which you have the sagacity to withdraw yourself."

Saying these words, Père d'Aigrigny cast a rapid glance at his *socius*, who replied by an approving sign, accompanied by a gesture of impatience, which seemed to say, quick! proceed — proceed!

Gabriel was aghast. There was not in the world a more generous, more devoted heart than his, and we may judge of his feelings when he heard this interpretation put upon his resolution.

"Father," he replied, with a voice full of emotion and eyes filled with tears, "your words are cruel — unjust, for you know I am no coward!"

"No," said Rodin, in his harsh and sarcastic tone, addressing himself to P. d'Aigrigny, "your dear son is prudent!"

At these words of Rodin Gabriel started; a slight colour suffused his pale cheeks, his large blue eyes glistened with generous indignation, and then, faithful to the precepts of resignation and Christian humility, he subdued the sensation of anger, bowed his head, and, too much moved to reply, was silent, and wiped the tear that trickled from his eye.

This tear did not escape the *socius*, who saw in it a favourable symptom, and again exchanged a look of satisfaction with P. d'Aigrigny.

The latter was then on the point of touching on the vital question, and, in spite of himself and his usual self-control, his voice was slightly tremulous, when, in a manner encouraged, impelled by a look from Rodin, who became extremely attentive, he said to Gabriel:

"Another motive also compels us not to hesitate in releasing you from your oaths, my dear son, — it is a question of extreme delicacy. You have, probably, learnt yesterday from your adopted mother that you were, perchance, called to an inheritance, of whose value I am ignorant."

Gabriel raised his head quickly, and said to P. d'Aigrigny:

"I have already declared to M. Rodin that my adopted mother only spoke to me of scruples of conscience, and I am ignorant, utterly ignorant, of the existence of the inheritance of which you speak to me, father."

The expression of indifference with which the young priest pronounced these last words was remarked by Rodin.

"Well, then," replied D'Aigrigny, "you are, I am willing to believe, ignorant of this, although all appearances prove the contrary; and prove, indeed, that the knowledge of this inheritance is active in making you desire to separate from us."

"I do not understand you, father."

"Still, what I say is simple enough. I say that your rupture with us has two motives: in the first place, we are threatened, and you think it prudent to leave us —"

"Father!"

"Allow me to conclude, my dear son, and to proceed to the second motive; if I am deceived, you will say so. The facts are these: At a former period, and in the supposition that your family, of whose fate you are ignorant, might leave you some property, you had, in return for the care which the company had taken of you, — you had made, I say, a gift of any future property that might fall to you, not to us, but to the poor, whose born guardians we are."

"Well, father?" inquired Gabriel, still ignorant whither this preamble tended.

"Well, my dear son, now that you are certain of enjoying some means, you desire, no doubt, in separating from us, to annul the donation conceded by you in former days."

"To speak clearly, you perjure your oath because we are persecuted, and because you wish to take back your gifts," added Rodin, in a harsh voice, as if to expose at once, in as plain and brutal a manner as possible, Gabriel's position to the Company of Jesus.

At this infamous accusation, Gabriel could only raise his hands and eyes to heaven, and exclaim, with dolorous agony, "Alas, alas!"

Père d'Aigrigny, after having exchanged an under-

standing glance with Rodin, said to him, in a stern voice, in order that he might appear to feel annoyed at his rude interference:

"I think you go too far; our dear son would have behaved in the base and cowardly way you describe, if he had been informed of his new position as heir; but, as he affirms the contrary, I must believe him in spite of appearances."

"Father," said Gabriel, pale, full of emotion, trembling, and yet subduing his painful indignation, "I thank you for suspending your judgment, at least. No, I am no coward; for God is my witness that I was ignorant of the dangers which your company runs; no, I am no coward, no, I am not avaricious; for God is my witness that it is but this moment that I learn from you, father, that it is possible I may be called on to receive an inheritance, and that — "

"One word, my dear son: I have recently learned this fact by the merest chance in the world," said Père d'Aigrigny, interrupting Gabriel; "and that, thanks to the family papers which your adopted mother had handed to her confessor, and which were confided to us when you entered our college. A short time before your return from America, whilst classifying the archives of the company, your name fell under the hand of our R. P., the procureur; the entries were examined, and then we discovered that one of your paternal ancestors, to whom this house in which we now are belonged, left a will, which is to be opened at noon this day. Yesterday evening we still deemed you as belonging to us; our statutes will it that we should not possess anything of our own; you had complied with these statutes, by a gift in favour of the patrimony of the poor, which we administer. It was then no longer you, but the company, who, in my person, came forward as heir in your place and stead, furnished with your claims, which I have here in due form. But now, my dear son, that

you separate from us, it is for you to present yourself; we only come here as holders of funds for the poor, to whom you had formerly piously given up all property you might one day possess; but now, at this moment, on the contrary, the hope of a fortune changes your feelings; you are free to do so; resume your gifts."

Gabriel had listened to Père d'Aigrigny with pained emotion, and then exclaimed: "And it is you, father, — you who think me capable of resuming a donation given freely in favour of the company, to acquit myself towards it for the education it had generously given to me? Is it you, indeed, who can believe me so infamous as to reclaim my word, because I am, perhaps, about to possess a small patrimony?"

"The patrimony, my dear son, may be small, — perhaps, considerable."

"Father," exclaimed Gabriel, his eyes kindling with a proud and noble indifference, "were a king's fortune involved in the matter, I should speak and act as I now do. I claim a right to be believed; and I now utter my irrevocable determination. You tell me the company to which I belong is in danger. I will ascertain the nature of the evils which threaten it; and if I find them imminent, spite of the fixed resolve which morally separates me from you at the present moment, I will wait till the dangers with which you are menaced have passed away before I quit the society to which I now belong. As for the inheritance you believe me so eager to obtain, I here formally renounce it even as I have previously bound myself to do; all I ask is, that the wealth I care not for may be distributed among the poor and needy. I neither know, nor desire to know, if the fortune you speak of be large or small; be it what it may, it belongs not to me, but the company. My word once passed is not to be recalled. I have already stated to you, father, that my only desire is to obtain a humble curacy in some poor village, — the poorer, the better, because, then and there,

I feel persuaded I could be useful. Thus, then, I have candidly stated how lowly are my wishes, and how unambitious the life I seek. Surely I may crave your belief and admission that an individual caring so little for the vain pomps of this world is wholly incapable of being instigated by avarice or love of riches to recall a gift once bestowed."

At these words, uttered with all the energy of truth, D'Aigrigny had almost as much difficulty to repress his delight as he had endured some time previously to conceal his alarm. Still preserving an outward calmness, he merely said, in reply to Gabriel:

"I expected nothing less of you, my dear son;" then making a sign to Rodin, expressive of his desire that he (Rodin) should join in the attack, the *socius*, quickly comprehending the telegraphic glance and gesture, quitted his attitude by the fireplace, and, approaching Gabriel, leaned upon a table, on which were placed an inkstand and materials for writing; then commencing, mechanically, to beat a tattoo on the table with his bony knuckles and dirty, ill-shapen nails, he said to D'Aigrigny:

"All this sounds very fine; but it seems to me that this favourite protégé of your reverence's has, after all, merely made a verbal promise, — a species of undertaking which is worth but very little; for — "

"Sir!" exclaimed Gabriel.

"Allow me to speak," said Rodin, coldly; "the law not choosing to recognise the existence of our Order, will not take cognisance of any donations made in favour of the company; you may, therefore, recall to-morrow what you have bestowed to-day."

"And my oath, so to bestow it, sir?" inquired Gabriel.

Rodin looked at him fixedly, then replied:

"Your oath? Why, you also took an oath of eternal obedience to the Order, which you vowed never to sepa-

rate yourself from! And yet, to-day, how irksome has that pledge become, and how anxious you are to be released from it!"

For an instant Gabriel found himself embarrassed by the question, but, quickly feeling how false was the comparison instituted by Rodin, he arose, and with a calm dignity seated himself before the desk, and, taking a pen and paper, proceeded to write as follows:

"Before God, who sees and hears me, — before you, M. d'Aigrigny and M. Rodin, whom I take as witnesses of my solemn vow, — I here renew, freely and voluntarily, the entire and absolute donation of all property to which I may be entitled, and which I bestow on the reverend Father d'Aigrigny, as the representative of the Company of Jesus; and to him, for the use and benefit of the said company, I, of my own free will, resign all inheritance to which I may be entitled, whether its amount be great or small; and here I bind myself never to revoke or recall the gift, considering it conscientiously as a just recompense for past favours, and its accomplishment not only as the mere acquittal of a debt of gratitude, but as a pious obligation.

"The present bequest being intended to repay past services, and aid in assisting the distressed and wretched, can never be affected by any future circumstances or events; and, because I know I may be legally enabled to annul the promise I here make of my own free will, I declare that, should I ever, under any circumstances whatever, seek to revoke it, I should merit the contempt and abhorrence of every good person.

"In witness thereof, I write this on the 13th of February, 1832, at Paris; at the moment when the will of one of my paternal ancestors is about to be opened.

"Gabriel de Rennepont."

Then rising, the young priest handed to Rodin the act so formally executed without uttering a word. The

socius read it with close attention; then, cold and impassive as ever, he merely looked at Gabriel, and observed:

"'Tis a well-written promise — nothing more."

Gabriel stood motionless with surprise at this determined boldness and assurance on the part of Rodin, who thus ventured to style a deed expressed with so much truth and fervour, and which so unequivocally contained a renewal of his former resignation of all property in favour of the company, a mere written promise of no weight or value.

The *socius* was the first to break the silence which prevailed by addressing D'Aigrigny in his usual tone of calm assurance.

"One thing is certain; either your favourite son and protégé here intends that the donation he talks of should be absolute, available, and irrevocable, or —"

"Sir!" cried Gabriel, restraining himself with much difficulty, and indignantly interrupting Rodin. "Spare yourself and me so shameful and degrading a suspicion."

"Well, then," observed the still impassive Rodin, "since you are firmly resolved to make this promise binding, what objection can you have to cause it to be legally attested?"

"None, sir," replied Gabriel, bitterly; "since neither my written words nor oath can convince you of my sincerity."

"My dear son," said D'Aigrigny, gently and affectionately, "did it refer merely to a gift you were making in my favour, I should prefer your simple word to any other guarantee you could offer; but the case is not so. I am here, as I before reminded you, merely as the representative of the company, or, rather, as the guardian of the poor, who will profit by your generous abandonment. We cannot, therefore, for humanity's sake, take too many precautions to render the deed strictly legal, in order that our poor brethren may enjoy a certainty, instead of merely possessing a vague hope, subject to be destroyed

by any change of will or purpose. Besides, the Almighty may call you hence at any moment; and who can answer for it that your heirs may feel scrupulous as to the fulfilment of the engagement entered into by you?"

"You are right, father," said Gabriel, mournfully; "I did not think of the probability of death. You allude to —"

At this moment Samuel, opening the door of the chamber, said:

"Gentlemen, the notary is here; shall I show him in? At ten o'clock precisely you will be admitted into the house."

"We shall be so much the more pleased to see the notary you speak of," said Rodin, "as we have some matters to talk over with him. Have the goodness to request he will join us immediately."

"I will go directly and inform him of your request," said Samuel, quitting the room.

"Now, then," said Rodin to Gabriel, "here is a notary; if you are really in earnest, you may legally attest your written document in his presence, and so relieve yourself of all apprehension for the future."

"Sir," said Gabriel, "whatever may happen, I shall ever hold myself as much bound by what I have here written, and which I beg of you, father, to take into your keeping (here Gabriel handed to D'Aigrigny the paper he had drawn up), as I can possibly do by any legal or attested document I may sign."

"Silence, my dear son," said D'Aigrigny; "the notary is here."

As he spoke these words, the person alluded to entered the apartment.

During the conversation which ensued between the four persons present we will conduct the reader to the interior of the so long shut-up house.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RED CHAMBER.

THE principal door of the walled house (as Samuel had said) had been freed from the masonry, the sheet of lead, and the iron bars which had fastened it up, and now its carved oak panels appeared as fresh and uninjured as on the day when they had been enclosed from the influence of air and time.

The workmen, after having concluded their work of removal, had remained on the steps, as curiously inquisitive as the notary's clerk, who had watched over their labours in aiding in the opening of the door; for they saw Samuel come slowly up from the garden, holding in his hand a large bunch of keys.

"Now, my friends," said the old man, when he reached the lower step of the flight, "your work is finished, and this gentleman's employer will pay you; I have nothing to do but to conduct you to the street door."

"But, I say, my worthy man," exclaimed the clerk, "you would not think of such a thing? We have arrived at a most interesting — the most curious moment, and I and these good fellows the masons are all in a stew to see the inside of this mysterious house; and you cannot, surely, have the heart to send us away? — that is impossible."

"I regret very much being obliged to do so, sir, but I am compelled. I must enter first, and quite alone, into the mansion, before I introduce the heirs for the reading of the will."

"But who gave you such ridiculous and barbarous orders?" said the disappointed clerk.

"My father, sir."

"A most respectable individual, no doubt; but, my worthy sir, let us have a look. My excellent guardian, my capital guardian," said the clerk, "just one peep through the half opened door!"

"Oh, yes, sir, only just a peep!" added the knights of the trowel, with an eager air.

"It is very disagreeable to me to refuse you, gentlemen," replied Samuel; "but I will not open this door until I am quite alone."

The masons, seeing the inflexibility of the old man, descended the steps of the stairs reluctantly; but the clerk made up his mind to dispute the ground, step by step, and exclaimed:

"I am waiting for my employer, and will not quit the place without him; he may want me, and whether I remain on the steps or anywhere else, I suppose, is of no consequence to you, my worthy guardian?"

The clerk was cut short in his entreaty by his employer, who, from the bottom of the court, called to him, with an air of business, saying:

"M. Piston, quick! Come here, M. Piston! Come to me directly!"

"What the deuce can he want of me?" said the clerk, quite savage. "He calls me at the very moment when, perhaps, I might have seen something —"

"M. Piston," repeated the voice, as it approached, "don't you hear me?"

Whilst Samuel was showing the masons out the clerk saw, at the turn of a clump of trees, his employer appear, hastening to him bareheaded, and appearing very intent on something.

The clerk was then forced to descend the steps to reply to the notary's call, and went towards him with a very ill grace.

"But, monsieur," said M. Dumesnil, "I have been calling for you this hour."

"Sir, I did not hear you," said M. Piston.

"Then you must be deaf. Have you any money about you?"

"Yes, sir," said the clerk, much surprised.

"Well, then, go as quickly as you can to the nearest shop where they sell stamped paper, and bring me three or four large sheets to draw up a deed. Run, for it requires despatch."

"I will, sir," said the clerk, casting a look of despairing regret on the door of the shut-up mansion.

"Make haste, Piston, will you?" continued the notary.

"I don't exactly know, sir, where to go for stamped paper."

"Here is the person in charge of the premises — I dare say he can tell you," replied M. Dumesnil.

Samuel, who had then dismissed the masons, was just at this moment approaching the house.

"Will you be good enough," said the notary, addressing him, "to tell this young gentleman where he is likely to obtain law stamps?"

"Close by, sir," replied Samuel; "at the tobacconist's in the Rue Vielle du Temple, No. 17."

"You hear?" said the notary, to his clerk; "you will get what is required at the tobacconist's, who lives at 17, Rue Vielle du Temple. Come, be quick, Piston! for the deed must be drawn up immediately, and duly prepared before the opening of the will — and time presses."

"I'll attend, sir," answered the clerk, sullenly. "I will be as quick as I can." So saying, he followed his employer, who hastily returned to the chamber, where he had left Rodin, D'Aigrigny, and Gabriel.

Meanwhile, Samuel, ascending the terrace steps, arrived at the door recently freed by the masons from the brickwork, iron, and lead which had enclosed it.

With deep emotion the old man, after having sought

among his bunch of keys for the one required, applied it to the lock, and at length succeeded in making the door turn upon its hinges.

As the long-closed portals once again unclosed, a gust of cold, damp air, such as might issue from a vault suddenly opened, blew on the Jew's face. Unheeding this, Samuel passed on, and, having carefully closed and double-locked the door from within, advanced into the hall, which was lighted by a sort of fanlight over the door; but the panes had long since lost their transparency, and now wore the appearance of ground glass.

This hall, chequered with alternate diamond-shaped pieces of black and white marble, was spacious and lofty, forming the approach to a wide staircase conducting to the upper story of the building; the walls, composed of smooth, polished stone, exhibited not the slightest appearance of damp; neither did the balustrade of wrought iron, appertaining to the staircase, display the smallest spot of rust. Level with the first step was a huge block of gray granite, supporting a statue of black marble, representing a negro holding a stand for a light. The eyeballs of this singular figure were of white marble, and imparted a strange look of wildness to the countenance, calculated, as well as the whole design, to strike the mind with a feeling allied both to awe and terror.

As the heavy step of the Jew resounded through the vast cupola of this vestibule, a melancholy recollection stole over the senses of the grandson of Isaac Samuel, as he remembered that, in all probability, the last echoes called forth in that deserted abode had been when his progenitor had closed the doors, upwards of a century and a half ago; for the faithful friend to whom M. de Rennepont had feigned to sell the house had quickly resigned it in favour of the grandfather of Samuel, who had subsequently bequeathed it, as his own property, to the different branches of his posterity.

To these mournful thoughts which floated in the memory of the old Jew, was added the recollection of the vivid light seen that morning issuing from the opening formed in the covering of the *belvéder*, and, spite of the firmness and resolution of his character, the Jew involuntarily shuddered as, again selecting a key from his bunch, on the label of which was written, Key of the Red Salon, he proceeded to open a pair of folding doors conducting to the interior apartments.

The window, which alone of all the others in the house had been opened by the workmen, threw a full and strong light into the apartment, whose hangings of dark purple damask did not appear to have sustained the least damage from the hand of time. A thick and rich Turkey carpet covered the floor; large gilt armchairs, modelled after the Sèvre style, belonging to the age of Louis XIV., were ranged in exact order along the walls; opposite the doors of entrance were a second pair, which, like the wainscot and ceiling, were white, ornamented with mouldings and divers ornaments of dark gold.

On each side of the door were two high stands of buhlwork, richly ornamented with designs in brass and iron, supporting splendid vases of sea-green crystal; the window, heavily draped with fringed damask curtains, surmounted by a valance cut in sharp points, from each of which depended a large silken tassel, was exactly opposite the fireplace, with its deep blue marble bordered with bands of wrought brass. Splendid candelabras, and a clock of the same style as the rest of the furniture, were reflected in a large Venetian glass.

A round table covered with crimson velvet stood in the centre of the salon.

Approaching the table, Samuel perceived lying on it a slip of white vellum, bearing these words:

"I desire that my will be opened in this apartment, and that every other chamber is kept closed until my last wishes have been duly read. M. DE R."

"Yes," said the Jew, after having contemplated with profound emotion the lines so long since traced, "this agrees precisely with the directions transmitted to me by my father, for it appears that the other chambers are filled with objects to which M. de Rennepont attached great price, not for their intrinsic value, but for the circumstances with which they were connected, and that the Chamber of Mourning is a strange and mysterious spot. But," added Samuel, drawing from the pocket of his greatcoat a book covered with black shagreen, and furnished with a lock, from which he took the key previously to placing the book on the table, "here is the cash account, and, according to the orders given to my father, I am to place it in this room before the arrival of the heirs."

The utmost silence reigned around as Samuel laid the important volume on the table; but all at once a circumstance, at once simple, yet terrifying, roused him from the deep reverie into which he had fallen.

A clock in the adjoining room, in a clear, distinct note of silvery strength, sounded the tenth hour of the day, the very precise time by all the surrounding clocks.

Samuel's natural good sense rejected all idea of perpetual motion, or the possibility of a clock going on unheeded and unattended for 150 years. Still he could not help asking himself, with as much alarm as surprise, by what means this clock had been so long kept going, and more especially how it happened to be so perfectly in accordance with all the timekeepers of the minute.

Instigated by a feeling of restless curiosity, the old man was on the point of entering this chamber, but recalling the express prohibitions of his father, reiterated by those few lines traced by the hand of M. de Renne-

pont, and which he had just read, made him stop as he reached the door, and listen with almost breathless attention.

Not a sound, however, was to be heard, save the expiring vibration of the hour which had just struck.

After having long reflected on the singularity of the circumstance, Samuel, associating it with the no less extraordinary light he had that morning seen through the openings in the windows of the *belvéder*, came to a perfect persuasion that the two incidents were intimately connected with each other.

If the old man could not explain the real cause of these singular appearances, he at least accounted to himself for them, by reflecting on the subterranean communications which, according to tradition, existed between the cellars of the mansion and distant places, and mysterious and unknown persons might thus have entered two or three times in a century into the interior of this abode.

Absorbed by these thoughts, Samuel drew nigh to the chimney, which, as we have said, was exactly opposite the window.

A bright ray of the sun, piercing through the clouds, shone fully on two large portraits placed one on each side of the mantelpiece, and which the Jew had not before remarked, and which, full-lengths and of the size of nature, represented one a female and the other a male.

By the colouring, at once subdued and powerful, of these paintings, by the bold and effective touch, it was easy to perceive that they were from the easel of a master.

It would have been, besides, very difficult to have found models more capable of inspiring a great artist.

The woman appeared from twenty-five to thirty years of age, and had a splendid head of brown hair, of golden hue, which graced a white, high, and noble forehead.

Her headdress, very different from that which Madame de Sévigné had brought into the fashion during the reign of Louis XIV., recalled, on the contrary, that remarkable style of the arrangement of the hair which we observe in several of Veronese's portraits, being formed by large bandeaux, whose wavy braids encircling the cheeks were surmounted by a mass plaited like a crown at the back of the head; the eyebrows beautifully arched over eyes of the brightest sapphire hue, whose look, at once haughty and melancholy, had, as it were, an appearance of fatality about them; the nose, very thin, ended in nostrils slightly expanded; a half smile, that was almost painful, slightly contracted the mouth; the oval of the face was long; the complexion was pure white, tinted towards the cheek with a slight blush of red; the set position of the neck and the carriage of the head announced a rare mixture of grace and native dignity. A sort of tunic, or robe of black and lustrous stuff, made what is styled *à la vierge*, reached up high on the shoulders, and, after having defined an elegant and graceful shape, fell down over the feet, which were entirely hidden by the full folds of the garment.

The attitude of the lady was full of nobleness and simplicity. The head stood out, full of light, and white on a ground of dark gray, marbled in the horizon by some purple clouds which rested on the blue peaks of distant and shadowy hills. The arrangement of the picture, as well as the warm and deep tone of the first outlines, which cut without any shading into these deepened shadings, made it evident that this female was placed on a height whence she could command a view of the whole horizon.

The physiognomy of the lady was deeply and distressingly pensive, and there was especially in her look, half raised towards heaven, an expression of supplicating grief and resignation, which it might have been supposed almost impossible to delineate.

On the left side of the mantelpiece was the other portrait, as powerfully painted.

It depicted a man from thirty to thirty-five years, of tall stature. A very large brown mantle, with which he was nobly clad, displayed a sort of black pourpoint, buttoned up to the neck, on which fell a square white collar. The head, striking and full of character, was remarkable for its powerful and manly lineaments, which, however, did not conceal a masterly expression of suffering resignation, and especially of excessive goodness. The hair, as well as the beard and eyebrows, was black; but these last, by a singular caprice of nature, instead of being separated and arched around each brow, extended from one temple to the other in one single curve, and seemed to mark this man's forehead with a black mask.

The background of the picture represented a stormy sky, but beyond some rocks was the sea, which seemed to unite its black waves with the horizon.

The sun shining full on these two remarkable figures, which, once having seen, it was impossible to forget, increased their effect most singularly.

Samuel starting from his reverie, and looking by chance on these portraits, was struck with surprise. They seemed as though they were alive.

"What noble and beautiful countenances!" he exclaimed, approaching nearer, that he might examine them more closely. "Whose portraits are they? Not those of the Rennepont family; for my father told me they were all in the Salon of Mourning. Alas!" added the old man, "by the deep sorrow imprinted on their features, they, too, as it seems to me, might have been placed in the Salon of Mourning."

Then, after a moment's silence, Samuel resumed:

"Let us now prepare for the solemn meeting, for the clock has struck ten."

So saying, Samuel placed the gilded armchairs

about the circular table, and then said, with a pensive air:

"The hour is drawing nigh; and of the descendants of the benefactor of my grandfather, there is but this young priest with that angelic countenance. Can he be, then, the sole descendant of the Rennepont family? He is a priest; and will that race then be extinct with him? Now, then, the moment is come when I must open the door for the reading of the will. Bathsheba will lead the notary hither. Some one knocks! 'Tis the —" And Samuel, after having cast a last look at the door of the apartment in which ten o'clock had struck, hurried towards the door of the vestibule, behind which he heard voices.

The key turned twice in the lock, and he opened the folding doors.

To his great chagrin he only saw on the steps Gabriel, with Rodin on his left, and the Père d'Aigrigny on his right.

The notary and Bathsheba, who had conducted them, were behind the principal group.

Samuel could not repress a sigh, and said, bowing as he stood on the threshold of the door:

"Gentlemen, all is ready; you may enter."

CHAPTER XX.

THE WILL.

When Gabriel, Rodin, and the Père d'Aigrigny, entered the Red Chamber, they all appeared differently affected.

Gabriel, pale and sad, was full of painful impatience. He was anxious to get away from the house as quickly as possible, and felt relieved from a heavy weight when by a deed, formal in all its clauses and arrangements, and duly witnessed before M. Dumesnil the notary to the succession, he had transferred all his rights in favour of Père d'Aigrigny.

Up to this period it had not occurred to the mind of the young priest that, in bestowing on him the cares which he so generously remunerated, and in compelling him to the vocation by a sacrilegious lie, Père d'Aigrigny had in view the securing the full success of an infamous and dark intrigue.

Gabriel, acting as he did, had not in his own mind yielded to any sentiment of exaggerated delicacy. He had freely made this donation several years before, and would have thought it the height of baseness to retract it. It was already cruel enough to him to have been suspected of this baseness, and no consideration in the world would have made him incur the smallest reproach for cupidity.

The missionary must have been endowed with a rare and admirable nature, for this flower of scrupulous probity had not been withered in the bud by the deleterious and demoralising influence of his education. But, fortu-

nately, as the cold sometimes preserves bodies from corruption, so the frozen atmosphere in which he had passed a portion of his infancy and youth had benumbed, but not vitiated, his nobler qualities, which were rapidly revived by the vivifying contact with air and freedom.

Père d'Aigrigny, much more pale and excited than Gabriel, had tried to explain and excuse his mental disquietude, by attributing it to the chagrin which he felt at the rupture between his dear son and the Company of Jesus.

Rodin, calm and perfectly master of himself, saw with silent anger the extreme emotion of Père d'Aigrigny, which might have excited strange suspicions in a man less confiding than Gabriel. Yet, notwithstanding his apparent *sang-froid*, the *socius* was, perhaps, even still more intensely impatient than his superior as to the result of this important affair.

Samuel appeared much dejected; no heir but Gabriel presented himself.

Unquestionably the old man felt a lively sympathy for this young man; but the young man was a priest, and with him would expire the name of the Rennepont family, and the vast fortune so laboriously accumulated would not now be spread and employed according to the desire of the testator.

The different actors in this scene stood around the circular table.

At the moment when, at the notary's invitation, they were about to sit down, Samuel said, pointing to the register in the black shagreen case:

"Sir, I have been ordered to place that register here; it is closed, but I will hand you the key immediately after the reading of the will."

"This circumstance is noted down in a memorandum which accompanied the will, which is here," said M. Dumesnil, "when that was deposited, in 1682, with M. Thomas le Semelier, privy councillor, notary in the

Châtelet de Paris, and then living Place Royale, No. 13."

So saying, M. Dumesnil took from a red morocco case, which he had under his arm, a large and thick envelope of parchment, grown yellow by time. There was a note, fastened by a piece of tape to this envelope.

"Gentlemen," said the notary, "if you will be so kind as to sit down, I will read this note appended, which directs the forms to be observed at the opening of the will."

The notary, Rodin, Père d'Aigrigny, and Gabriel seated themselves. The young priest, having his back to the mantelpiece, could not see the portraits.

Samuel, in spite of the notary's invitation, remained standing behind his (the notary's) chair, who read as follows:

"Thirteenth February, 1832, my will is to be taken to the Rue St. François, No. 3.

"At ten o'clock, precisely, the door of the Red Room on the ground floor shall be opened to my heirs, who, no doubt, will have reached Paris long before, in the expectation of this day, and will have had the necessary time to have established the proofs of their affinity.

"As soon as they are all assembled my will shall be read, and when the last sound of the midday shall have struck, the succession shall be closed and ended to the profit of those who, according to my request, — perpetuated, I trust, by being handed down for a century and a half in my family from this day forward, — will have presented themselves in person and not by proxies, on the 13th February, before noon, in the Rue St. François."

After having read these lines, in an audible voice, the notary paused for a moment, and then added, in a solemn voice:

"Monsieur Gabriel-François-Marie de Rennepont, priest, having established by notarial acts his paternal

affinity and his relationship, a cousin by descent of the testator, and being at this hour the sole descendant of the Rennepont family who has presented himself here, I open the will in his presence, as has been directed."

So saying, the notary drew forth from its envelope the will, which had been previously opened by the President of the Tribunal, with all the formalities required by the law.

The Père d'Aigrigny bent forward, and, leaning on the table, could not repress a deep sigh. Gabriel was prepared to listen with more curiosity than interest.

Rodin was seated a little space away from the table, holding his old hat between his knees, at the bottom of which, half concealed in the folds of a dirty, blue-checked cotton handkerchief, he had placed his watch.

All the attention of the *socius* was thus divided between the slightest noise he heard without, and the slow progress of the hands of his watch, whilst his small and angry eyes seemed to desire to hasten the speed, so great was his impatience to arrive at the hour of noon.

The notary, opening the sheet of vellum, read what follows, with profound attention:

"HAMLET OF VILLETANEUSE, 13th February, 1682.

"I am about to escape, by death, from the shame of the galleys, where the implacable enemies of my family have condemned me as a relapsed heretic.

"And, besides, my life is too deeply embittered since my son has died the victim of a mysterious crime.

"Dead at nineteen years of age! Poor Henry, his murderers are unknown! No, not unknown, if I may believe my presentiments.

"To preserve my property for my child I had feigned to abjure Protestantism. So long as this beloved being existed I have scrupulously observed all the Catholic appearances. This deed was most hateful to me, but I did it in my child's interest.

"When they killed him the constraint was insupportable to me: I was watched, and have been accused and condemned as a relapsed heretic; my property has been confiscated, and I myself condemned to the galleys.

"Oh, what a terrible time I have endured!

"Misery and servitude! Fierce despotism and religious intolerance! Ah, how sweet it is to quit life — to see no further ills and griefs! What repose it will be!

"And in a few hours I shall taste that repose.

"I am about to die, and let me, therefore, think of those belonging to me, who live, or rather will live, perhaps, in better times.

"A sum of fifty thousand crowns, deposited with a confidential friend, alone remains to me of all my wealth.

"I have no other sons, but many relations, exiled over Europe.

"This sum of fifty thousand crowns, divided among all my kinsfolk, would have been but a scanty amount for each. I have otherwise disposed of it.

"And I have done so in conformity with the wise counsel of a man whom I hold in the very highest estimation, for his understanding, his wisdom, and his goodness are almost superhuman.

"Twice in my life I have seen this man, and under most disastrous circumstances; twice have I owed my safety to him, — once the safety of my soul, once the safety of my body.

"Alas! perhaps he might have saved my poor child; but he arrived too late — too late!

"Before he left me he tried to dissuade me from death, for he knew all; but his voice was powerless. I experienced too much anguish — too many regrets — too great depression.

"Is he, then, destined to live? Is he?

"Yes, I have no doubt but that he is destined to live, in order that he may be useful and full of succour to

humanity; and yet life oppresses him, for one day I heard him say, in accents of despairing weariness, that I never can forget, 'Oh, life, life! Who will free me from thee?'

"Is it, then, a burden to him?

"He has left me, and his parting words have made me contemplate death with calmness.

"Thanks to him, my death will not be unprofitable.

"Thanks to him, these lines, written at this moment by a man who in a few hours will have ceased to live, may bring forth, perchance, great things in a century and a half. Ah, yes, great and noble things, if my wishes are piously attended to by my descendants, for it is to my future race that I thus address myself.

"That they may better understand and appreciate the last wish I make, and which I entrust them to fulfil, they who are as yet non-existent and in the nothingness into which I am about to enter, they must know the persecutions of my family before they can avenge their ancestors, — but by a noble revenge!

"My grandfather was a Catholic. Tempted less by religious zeal than by perfidious counsel, he affiliated himself, although a layman, to a society whose power has always been terrible and mysterious, — to the Society of Jesus."

At these words in the will, the P. d'Aigrigny, Rodin, and Gabriel looked at each other almost involuntarily. The notary, who did not observe this, still continued:

"At the end of several years, during which he had not ceased to profess for this society the most entire devotion, he was suddenly enlightened by fearful revelations as to the secret end which it proposed, as well as to its modes of attaining it.

"This was in 1610, a month before the assassination of Henry IV.

"My grandfather, alarmed at the secret, of which he found himself the depositary in spite of himself, and the signification of which was made most complete afterwards by the death of the best of kings, — my grandfather not only broke with the Society of Jesus, but, as his Catholicism altogether appeared to him wholly responsible for the crimes of the society, he abandoned the Romish religion, in which he had hitherto lived, and became a Protestant.

"Irrefragable proofs, attesting the complicity of two members of this company with Ravaillac, — a complicity also borne out by the crime subsequently committed by Jean Châtel the regicide, — were in my grandfather's hands.

"Such was the first cause of the deadly enmity of this society against our family.

"Thanks to God, these papers are in a place of safety! My father handed them to me, and, if my last wishes are executed, these papers, marked A. M. C. D. G., will be found in the ebony coffer in the Room of Mourning in the Rue St. François.

"My father was thus exposed to bitter persecution. His ruin, his death, perhaps, would have been the consequence of them, but for the interposition of an angel in a woman's form, for whom he preserved an almost religious worship.

"The portrait of this female, whom I also saw some years since, and that of the man to whom I have vowed the deepest veneration, have been painted by me from memory, and are placed in the Red Chamber of the Rue St. François. Both will be, I hope, the objects of a grateful respect to the descendants of my family."

For some moments Gabriel had become more and more attentive to the reading of the will: he thought that by a singular coincidence one of his ancestors had, two centuries before, severed himself from the Society

of Jesus, as he himself had dissevered from it within an hour, and that this rupture, dating two centuries back, also gave date to the hatred with which the Company of Jesus had always persecuted his family.

The young priest found it no less strange that this inheritance, transmitted to him after the lapse of 150 years by one of his ancestors, a victim of the Society of Jesus, should return, by the voluntary surrender which he (Gabriel) had just made to the same society.

When the notary read the passage relative to the two portraits, Gabriel, who, as well as Père d'Aigrigny, was sitting with his back to these paintings, turned to look at them.

Scarcely had the missionary cast his eyes on the portrait of the female than he uttered a loud cry of surprise and almost affright.

The notary stopped reading the will, and looked at the young priest with uneasiness.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LAST STROKE OF NOON.

At the cry uttered by Gabriel the notary had suspended the reading of the will, and Père d'Aigrigny had drawn close to the young priest.

Gabriel, standing up and trembling violently, contemplated the portrait of the female with increasing amazement.

Then he said, in a low tone, and as if speaking to himself:

"Is it possible that chance should produce such resemblances? Those eyes, at once so proud and sorrowful, are hers; and that forehead, that paleness, and those features — yes, those features?"

"My dear son, what ails you?" said Père d'Aigrigny, as much astonished as Samuel and the notary.

"It is just eight months since," said the missionary, with a voice profoundly agitated, and fixing his eyes on the picture, "I was in the power of the Indians in the midst of the Rocky Mountains. They had placed me on a cross, and were beginning to scalp me. I was about to die when Divine Providence sent me unexpected succour. Yes, it was that female who saved me!"

"That female!" exclaimed at once Samuel, D'Aigrigny, and the notary. Rodin alone appeared completely unmoved by this episode of the portrait, his countenance was contracted with fierce anger, and he bit his nails to the quick, as he contemplated with anguish the slow march of the hands of his watch.

"What do you mean? What female saved your life?" inquired Père d'Aigrigny.

"Yes, this female," replied Gabriel, in a lower and almost frightened tone, "this female, or rather a female who resembles her so completely that, if this picture had not been painted a century and a half ago, I should believe that it had been painted for her; for I cannot account for so striking a likeness being the effect of chance. But," he added, after a moment's silence, and heaving a deep sigh, "the mysteries of nature and the will of God are impenetrable."

And Gabriel fell back in his chair quite overcome in the midst of a profound silence, which Père d'Aigrigny soon broke by saying:

"It is, in truth, a wonderful resemblance, and nothing more, my dear son; but the very natural gratitude which you felt for your benefactress adds to this singular caprice of nature a great interest for you."

Rodin, devoured by impatience, said to the notary, by whose side he was sitting:

"It seems to me, sir, that all this little romance has nothing to do with the will."

"You are right, sir," replied the notary, again seating himself; "but the fact is so extraordinary, so romantic, as you say, that we cannot forbear from partaking of the gentleman's extreme astonishment."

And he pointed to Gabriel, who, leaning his elbow on one of the arms of the chair, hid his face in his hands, and seemed completely absorbed.

The notary then continued the reading of the will:

"Such have been the persecutions to which my family have been exposed from the Society of Jesus.

"This society possesses at this time my property by confiscation. I am about to die, may its hatred be quenched in my death, and so spare my descendants!

"My descendants, whose fate is my sole, my last thought, at this solemn moment.

"This morning I have summoned to me a man of probity long-tried, — Isaac Samuel. He owes his life to me, and every day I rejoice that I was able to preserve to the world so honest, so excellent a creature.

"Before the confiscation of my property Isaac Samuel had always taken charge of it, with as much intelligence as honesty. I have confided to him the fifty thousand crowns which a faithful depositary had restored to me.

"Isaac Samuel, and after him his descendants, to whom he will bequeath this debt of gratitude, will undertake to invest and accumulate this sum until the expiration of the one hundred and fiftieth year from this day.

"This sum thus accumulated must become enormous, and form a king's fortune, if events are not adverse to its accumulation.

"May my wishes be heard by my descendants as to the division and employment of this immense sum!

"There arrive, unhappily, in a century and a half, such a change of events, such variations, so many vicissitudes of fortune, amongst the successive generations of a family, that probably in one hundred and fifty years my descendants will be found to belong to different classes of society, and will represent the different social elements of their time.

"Perhaps there will be found amongst them men endowed with great intelligence, or great courage, or great virtue; perhaps learned men, names illustrious in war or the fine arts; perhaps, also, obscure artisans, humble tradesmen; perhaps, also, great criminals.

"Whatever may happen, my most ardent, most anxious desire is, that my descendants will draw nigh to each other, and re-form my family by a close and sincere union, by putting in practice amongst themselves those divine words of Christ, 'Love one another.'

"This union would have a most salutary example; for it appears to me, that from union, from the association of men with one another, ought to proceed the future happiness of humanity.

"The company which has for so long a time persecuted my family is one of the most tremendous examples of the immense power of association, even when applied to evil.

"There is something so fertile, so divine, in this principle, that it sometimes impels to good the worst and most dangerous associations.

"Thus, missions have thrown rare, but pure and noble lights into this dark Society of Jesus, which was, notwithstanding, founded for the detestable and impious purpose of destroying, by a homicidal system of education, all will, all thought, all liberty, all intelligence amongst the people, in order to deliver them over trembling, superstitious, brutalised, and defenceless, to the despotism of kings, whom the company would reserve to itself, in order to govern them in their turn by their confessors."

At this passage in the will there was a new and strange look exchanged between Gabriel and the Père d'Aigrigny.

The notary resumed:

"If an association perverted as this is, based on human degradation, fear, and despotism, and pursued by the curse of the people, has engrafted itself for ages, and frequently governed the world by stratagem and terror, what might not an association effect which, emanating from fraternity and evangelic love, proposed to enfranchise man and womankind from all degrading servitude, and to lead to happiness here below those who have known in life only the grief and miseries of increasing and enriching the soil which had fed them; to lighten those whom ignorance has depraved; to

favour the free expansion of all the passions which God in his infinite wisdom, in his inexhaustible bounty, has implanted in man, as so many powerful levers; to sanctify all that emanates from God, love as well as maternity, power as well as wisdom, beauty as well as genius; to render men, indeed, really religious, and profoundly grateful towards their Creator, by giving them the knowledge of the splendours of nature, and their just share of the treasures with which he has gifted us?

"Oh, may Heaven will that, in a century and a half, the descendants of my family, faithful to the last wishes of a heart friendly to humankind, may thus unite in a holy community!

"If Heaven wills that amongst them are charitable souls, full of commiseration for those who suffer,—elevated understandings, fond of freedom; eloquent and warm hearts, firm characters; females uniting beauty, mind, and goodness,—how productive and great must be the powerful union of all these ideas, all these influences, all these forces, all these attractions, assembled around this princely fortune, which, concentrated by this association, and wisely regulated, may render practicable the most Utopian schemes!

"What a marvellous source of fruitful thoughts and generous impulses, what salutary and vivifying rays will incessantly dart from this centre of charity, emancipation, and love!

"What great things may be attempted, what magnificent examples given to the world by practice! What a divine apostleship! In truth, what an irresistible impulse towards good may be impressed on the whole of human nature by a family thus grouped, and thus dispensing its means of action!

"And then, that association for good may be capable of combating the fearful association of which I am the victim, and which, perhaps, in a century and a half, will have lost nothing of its redoubtable influences!

"Then, to this work of darkness, restraint, and despotism, which weighs so heavily on the Christian world, my race may oppose a work of light, expansion, and liberty.

"The genius of good and the genius of evil will be in operation face to face.

"The struggle would commence, and God would protect the just.

"And in order that the immense pecuniary resources which must give so much power to my family should not be exhausted, but renew with years, my heirs attending to my wishes will invest, under the same conditions of accumulation, double the sum which I have bequeathed; and then, in another century and a half after them, what a new source of power and action for their descendants! What a perpetuity of effecting good!

"They will find, I should observe, in the large ebony chest in the Room of Mourning, certain ideas drawn up on the subject of this association.

"These are my last wishes, or, rather, my latest hopes.

"If I require absolutely that my race should be in person in the Rue St. François on the day of the opening of this will, it is in order that, being united at this solemn moment, they will see and know each other; and then, perhaps, my words will strike them, and, instead of living divided, they will unite. Their interests will gain by it, and my wish be accomplished.

"Sending as I did, a few days since, to those of my family whom exile has dispersed over Europe, a medal, on which is engraven the date of this meeting of my heirs, in a century and a half from this day, I have felt it right to keep secret the real motive, only saying that my lineage had a great interest in being present at this meeting.

"I have acted thus because I know the cunning and pertinacity of the company whose victim I am; for if

the society could know that at this period my descendants will divide immense sums, their deep-laid schemes, and, perchance, great dangers, would beset and menace my family, for sinister orders are transmitted from century to century in the Society of Jesus.

"May this precaution be efficacious!

"May my wish expressed on the medals have been faithfully transmitted from generation to generation!

"If I fix the day and fatal hour at which my succession will be irrevocably closed in favour of those of my descendants who shall present themselves in the Rue St. François on the 13th February, 1832, before noon, it is because there must be a limit assigned to all delay, and that my heirs will have been sufficiently informed for many years that they must not fail to be present at this meeting.

"After the reading of my will, the person who shall be the depositary of the accumulation of funds shall declare their value and their amount, in order that at the last stroke of noon the sums thus accumulated shall be revealed and divided amongst the heirs assembled.

"Then the apartments of the house shall be opened. They will see therein things worthy of their interest, their pity, and their respect, especially in the Chamber of Mourning.

"My desire is that this house is not sold, but remains furnished as it is, and that it may serve as a place of assembling for my descendants, if, as I hope, they attend to my last prayer.

"If, on the contrary, there is division amongst them; if, instead of uniting to carry out one of the most generous enterprises that ever marked an age, they yield to egotistical passions; if they prefer a sterile individuality to a productive association; if in this immense fortune they only see the means of a frivolous dissipation or sordid accumulation, may they be accursed by all those they might have loved, succoured, and emanci-

pated; let this house be destroyed and rased to the ground, and let all these papers, of which Isaac Samuel will have left the inventory, be, as well as the two portraits in the Red Chamber, burned by the guardian of the abode.

"I have said.

"Now my duty ends.

"In all this I have followed the advice of the man I venerate and love as the real image of God on earth.

"The faithful friend who handed to me the fifty thousand crowns, the wreck of my fortune, alone knows how I mean to employ them. I could not refuse to his friendship, firm as I have proved it to be, this proof of confidence; but, at the same time, I have concealed from him the name of Isaac Samuel, for this would have been to expose him, and his descendants especially, to great dangers.

"In a short time my friend, who is ignorant of my intention to die, will be here with my notary, and it is to their hands that, after due and customary formalities, I shall consign this sealed testament.

"Such are my last wishes. I submit their accomplishment to the superintendence of Providence. God will surely protect those wishes of love, peace, union, and liberty.

"This mystic[1] will having been freely made by me, and entirely written by my own hand, I trust and desire that it is scrupulously executed in spirit and in letter.

"Dated this 13th February, 1682, one o'clock P. M.

"MARIUS DE RENNEPONT."

As the notary had continued the reading of the will, Gabriel had been successively agitated by various and painful impressions. At first, as we have said, he thought it strange that fate had decreed that this immense fortune, coming from a victim of the com-

[1] This is the phrase used in French jurisprudence.

pany, should revert to this company by a donation which he had just renewed.

Then his charitable and elevated mind having made him understand that he might have been the instrument of the noble family association so earnestly hoped for by Marius de Rennepont, he thought, with deep bitterness, that in consequence of his renunciation, and in the absence of all other heirs, this vast idea was impossible of execution, and that this fortune, much more considerable than he had conjectured, would fall into the hands of an evil society, who might make it a terrible means of action.

But it must be said, the soul of Gabriel was so beautiful, so pure, that he did not entertain the slightest personal regret in hearing that the wealth which he had renounced was so vast; he was rather pleased, by a touching contrast, to discover that he had escaped being rich, by reflecting on the humble parsonage where he hoped soon to live, in the practice of the most holy evangelical virtues.

These ideas clashed in his mind confusedly. The sight of the female portrait, the sinister disclosures revealed in the will, the expansive views contained in the last wishes of M. de Rennepont, so many extraordinary incidents, threw Gabriel into a sort of stupor of astonishment, in which he was still plunged when Samuel said to the notary, handing to him the key of the register:

"You will find, sir, in this register the actual amount of the sums which are in my possession, in consequence of the capitalisation and accumulation of the 150,000 francs confided to my grandfather by M. Marius de Rennepont."

"Your grandfather!" exclaimed Père d'Aigrigny, greatly surprised. "Is it your family, then, which has constantly invested these sums?"

"Yes, sir; and my wife will in a few moments bring the chest which contains the securities."

"And what may be the amount of the figure?" inquired Rodin, with a well-counterfeited air of indifference.

"M. le Notaire can easily calculate," replied Samuel, with the most perfect simplicity, as though merely referring to the 150,000 francs forming the original deposit. "I have now sterling value to deliver up, amounting to 212,175,000 francs. No, let me be exact; 160,000, I think, without reckoning — "

"What did you say?" exclaimed D'Aigrigny, without allowing Samuel to proceed, and caring very little for the odd money when so splendid a total was named.

"Yes, yes," cried Rodin, almost gasping for breath, and for the first time in his life losing his cool self-possession, "let's have the figure — the amount — the total."

"I observed, sir," said the old man, "that I had now in hand 212,175,000 francs, part in cash, part in securities; as you will find, M. le Notaire, for here comes my wife with the money itself."

As he spoke, Bathsheba entered, bearing the cedar casket containing the immense sums just recited. This she placed on the table, and, after exchanging a look of affectionate regret with Samuel, quitted the room.

An almost stupor seemed to seize upon the different persons present, as Samuel pronounced the immense sums which had been left in his charge.

D'Aigrigny and Rodin reckoned upon about forty million; but even this enormous wealth was now declared to be five times greater.

Gabriel, as he heard the notary while reading the will speak of a fortune befitting a king, and entirely ignorant of the prodigious effects of employing a capital well, had valued the bequest at three or four millions. Well then might the amount startle and overwhelm his ideas, which, spite of his pure and honourable mind, were almost thunderstruck by the conviction thus pressed upon him, that, had he been less precipitate, these boundless treasures would have all been his.

The notary, almost as much surprised as the rest, began examining the accounts laid before him, as though he could scarcely credit the evidence of his own senses.

The Jew remained pensive and sad, painfully regretting there being no other candidate for this immense inheritance.

In the midst of the deep silence which prevailed, the clock in the adjoining chamber began slowly to strike the hour of twelve. Samuel started, then heaved a profound sigh; a few seconds only remained ere the fatal hour would have sounded, and further hope of other heirs arriving be lòst for ever.

The agitation of D'Aigrigny, Rodin, and Gabriel was so great, and their minds so preoccupied, that it never once occurred to them how singular it was a clock should be going in a house so long deserted.

"Twelve o'clock!" exclaimed Rodin; and by an involuntary movement he hastily grasped the casket with both his hands, as though to take possession of it.

"At length!" cried D'Aigrigny, with an expression of joy, triumph, and enthusiasm, impossible to describe; and then he added, throwing himself into Gabriel's arms, and embracing him with extreme energy and excitement: "Oh, my dear son, how the poor will bless you! You are a Saint Vincent de Paul! You shall be canonised — I swear you shall!"

"Let us first thank Providence," said Rodin, with a grave and excited air, and falling on his knees; "let us thank Providence, who has permitted so much wealth to be employed to the greater glory of the Lord."

Père d'Aigrigny, after having embraced Gabriel, took him by the hand and said:

"Rodin is right. Fall on your knees, my dear son, and let us return thanks to Providence."

So saying, Père d'Aigrigny knelt down, drawing with him Gabriel, who, giddy, confused, and no longer able to

collect his thoughts, so much had the various events bewildered him, knelt mechanically.

The last stroke of noon struck. They all rose.

Then the notary said, in a voice slightly altered, for there was something extraordinary and solemn in the scene:

"No other heir of M. Marius de Rennepont having presented himself before noon, I execute the will of the testator, in declaring, in the name of justice and law, M. François-Marie-Gabriel de Rennepont, here present, the sole and only heir and possessor of the property, personal and real, land, and valuables of all sorts, arising from the succession of the testator, which property, the heir, Gabriel de Rennepont, priest, has freely and voluntarily made gift, by notarial act, to Sieur Frederic Emmanuel de Bordeville, Marquis d'Aigrigny, priest, who by the same deed has accepted the same, and has thus become legitimate successor in the stead and place of the said Gabriel de Rennepont, by the fact of this donation between two surviving persons, engrossed by me this morning, and signed Gabriel de Rennepont, and Frederic d'Aigrigny, priests."

At this moment there was heard in the garden a loud noise of voices. Bathsheba entered hastily, and said to her husband, in an agitated voice:

"Samuel, a soldier, who insists —"

Bathsheba could not say another word.

At the door of the Red Chamber appeared Dagobert.

The soldier was deadly pale, and seemed ready to sink; he carried his left arm in a sling, and was leaning on Agricola.

At the sight of Dagobert the flaccid and cadaverous eyelids of Rodin were suddenly injected, as if all his blood had then mounted to his brain.

Then the *socius* seized the casket with a movement of anger, and with a grasp so ferocious, that it seemed as if he were resolved, by covering it with his body, to defend it at the peril of his life.

CHAPTER XXII.

DONATION BY THE LIVING.

Père d'Aigrigny did not recognise Dagobert, and had never seen Agricola; and thus for a moment did not comprehend the excessive fright which Rodin exhibited; but the R. P. soon understood all when he heard Gabriel utter a cry of joy, and saw him throw himself into the arms of the smith, saying:

"Thou, brother! and you, my second father! Ah, it is Heaven itself that sends you!"

After having clasped Gabriel's hand, Dagobert advanced towards the Père d'Aigrigny with a quick, though somewhat unsteady step.

Observing the threatening looks of the soldier, the R. P., strong in his acquired rights, and feeling himself at home as twelve o'clock had struck, receded a step and said, with an imperious air, to the veteran:

"Who are you, sir; and what do you want?"

Instead of making any reply, the soldier advanced several paces nearer, and then, stopping short when he was close to Père d'Aigrigny, he looked at him for a moment with so fearful a mixture of curiosity, contempt, hatred, and boldness, that the ex-colonel of hussars, for a time disconcerted, cast down his eyes before the pale face and enraged look of the veteran.

The notary and Samuel, struck by surprise, remained mute spectators of this scene, whilst Agricola and Gabriel followed with anxiety the least movement of Dagobert.

As to Rodin, he had feigned to lean over the casket, in order to be able to cover it effectually with his body.

At last overcoming the embarrassment he experienced from the unrelenting gaze of the soldier, Père d'Aigrigny raised his head and repeated:

"I ask you, sir, who you are, and what you seek?"

"Then you do not remember me?" said Dagobert, restraining himself with great difficulty.

"No, sir."

"Well, then," replied the soldier, with the utmost disdain, "you lowered your eyes with shame when, at Leipsic, where you fought with the Russians against the French, General Simon, covered with wounds, replied to you, renegade! when you demanded his sword, 'I do not surrender my sword to a traitor!' and dragging himself along the ground until he reached a Russian grenadier, he surrendered his sword to him. By the side of General Simon there was a soldier also wounded. I was that soldier!"

"Well, sir; and what is your business here?" inquired Père d'Aigrigny, with difficulty mastering his anger.

"I wish to unmask you, — you, who are a priest as infamous, and as execrated by all, as Gabriel here is a priest, admired and blessed by all!"

"Sir!" said the marquis, becoming livid with anger and emotion.

"I tell you that you are a scoundrel," said the soldier, energetically, "to have used the infamous means you have to despoil the daughters of Marshal Simon, Gabriel, and Mlle. de Cardoville, of their inheritance!"

"What do you say?" asked Gabriel; "the daughters of Marshal Simon —"

"Are your relatives, my dear boy; as well as that worthy young lady, Mlle. de Cardoville, the benefactress of Agricola, also. This priest," and he pointed to Père d'Aigrigny, "has shut up one as mad in a lunatic asylum, and immured the orphans in a convent. As to you, my

dear lad, I did not hope to meet you here, believing that they would have kept you away as well as the others, this morning; but, thank God, you are, and I have come in time. I could not arrive earlier because of my wound. I have lost so much blood that I have been in a swoon all the morning."

"Oh," exclaimed Gabriel, with anxiety, "I had not remarked that you carried your arm in a sling. How did you come by your wound?"

At a look from Agricola, Dagobert replied:

"It is nothing,—I had a fall; but here I am, and now we will unmask all these treacheries."

It is impossible to depict the curiosity, anguish, surprise, and fear of the different actors of this scene, whilst listening to these threatening words of Dagobert.

But of all, the one most overwhelmed was Gabriel. His angelic features were agonised, his knees trembled. Thunderstruck by the disclosure of Dagobert, and learning the existence of other heirs, for some moments he could not utter a syllable; but at length he exclaimed, in a despairing voice:

"It is I, alas! it is I, who am the cause of the spoliation of this family!"

"You, my brother!" said Agricola.

"Have they not also sought to rob you?" added Dagobert.

"The will," replied Gabriel, with increasing anguish, "bequeathed the property to those heirs who should present themselves before midday."

"Well!" said Dagobert, alarmed at the emotion of the young priest.

"Noon has struck," replied Gabriel, "and I was the only member of my family here present. Do you understand me now? The moment has passed, and the heirs are dispossessed by me."

"By thee!" said Dagobert, stammering with joy,—"by thee, my dear child! Then all is still saved!"

"Yes — but —"

"All is saved!" added Dagobert, radiant with joy and interrupting Gabriel; "you will share it with the others — I know you will — enough!"

"But I have surrendered all this property in an irrevocable manner," cried Gabriel, with despair.

"Surrendered all the property!" said Dagobert, petrified; "but to whom — to whom?"

"To that gentleman," said Gabriel, pointing to D'Aigrigny.

"To him! To him!" repeated Dagobert, aghast. "To the renegade who has always been the evil demon of the family!"

"But, brother," exclaimed Agricola, "did you then know of your claims to this inheritance?"

"No," replied the young priest, overwhelmed, — "no; I only knew it this morning from Père d'Aigrigny, who had been, as he assured me, recently instructed in my rights by family papers, found upon me long ago, and handed by our mother to her confessor."

The smith appeared struck with a sudden idea, and exclaimed:

"Now I see it all! They saw by these papers that you would be rich some day, and so they took an interest in you, admitted you into the college, where we could never see you, and afterwards they induced you by falsehood to take holy orders; so that, by making you a priest, they ultimately induced you to make this donation. Ah, sir," added Agricola, turning towards Père d'Aigrigny indignantly, "my father is right, and this is the infamous plot!"

During this scene, the R. P. and his *socius*, at first alarmed and shaken in their audacity, had gradually resumed their perfect *sang-froid*.

Rodin, still leaning on the casket, had said several words in a low voice to Père d'Aigrigny, and when Agricola, unable to repress his indignation, had reproached

this latter with his infamous machinations, he lowered his eyes and meekly replied:

"It is our duty to forgive injuries, and offer them to the Lord as a proof of our humility."

Dagobert overcome, stunned by all he had learnt, felt almost as if his senses were leaving him; after so much anguish and so many difficulties, his strength failed him at this new and terrible blow.

The true and sensible remarks of Agricola, taken in connection with certain parts of the will, suddenly enlightened Gabriel as to the end which Père d'Aigrigny had in view by taking charge of his education, and then inducing him to join the Company of Jesus. For the first time in his life, Gabriel saw at a glance all the bearings of the dark intrigue of which he was the victim, and then indignation and despair surmounting his habitual timidity, the missionary, with sparkling eyes and cheeks inflamed with noble ire, exclaimed, addressing himself to Père d'Aigrigny:

"Thus then, father, when you placed me in one of your colleges, it was not from interest or commiseration, but only with a hope of inducing me one day to renounce my share of this inheritance in favour of your Order; and it was not enough to sacrifice me alone to your cupidity, but it was requisite, besides, to render me the involuntary instrument of an infamous spoliation! If I alone were concerned, if it were but a question of my claims to this wealth which you covet, I would not ask it again. I am a minister of religion which has glorified and sanctified poverty. The donation to which I have assented you have obtained, and I do not desire — I never shall desire anything. But it has become a question of the property which belongs to poor orphan girls, brought from distant exile by my adopted father, and I will not allow them to be dispossessed; it has become a question of the benefactress of my adopted brother, and I will not have her dispossessed; it has become a question of

the last wishes of a dying man, who, in his ardent love of humanity, has bequeathed to his descendants an evangelic mission, an admirable labour of progress, love, union, and liberty, and I will not consent that this mission, this labour, be stifled in its birth. No, no! and I tell you that this mission shall be accomplished, even if I should revoke the donation which I have made."

At these words Père d'Aigrigny and Rodin looked at each other, and shrugged their shoulders slightly.

At a sign from the *socius* the R. P. began to speak with unshaken calmness, and in a low and unctuous tone of voice, and keeping his eyes constantly cast down:

"With reference to this inheritance of M. de Rennepont, there are several circumstances, apparently complicated, which present themselves, — several shadowy assertions which seem menacing, whilst, in fact, nothing can be more simple, more natural, than this whole affair. Let us proceed in order, let us cast aside all calumnious imputations for the present, — we can revert to them hereafter. M. l'Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont, — and I humbly beg him to contradict and rectify my words if I diverge in the slightest manner from the strictest truth, — M. l'Abbé Gabriel, to evince his gratitude for the care which, in former days, he has received from the company to which I consider it an honour to belong, made to me, as the representative of this company, freely and voluntarily, a gift of the property which might at any time revert to him, and of the amount of which, as well as I myself, he was entirely ignorant."

The Père d'Aigrigny looked at Gabriel as if to obtain his acquiescence to these words.

"That is true," said the young priest; "I made the gift freely."

"This morning, in a conversation of a most confidential nature, and on which I shall be silent, assured as I am of the approbation of M. l'Abbé Gabriel?"

"Certainly," said Gabriel, generously, "the subject of that conversation is unimportant."

"It was then in consequence of this conversation that M. l'Abbé Gabriel again manifested the desire to abide by this donation, I will not say in my favour, for terrestrial possessions touch me but little, but in favour of holy and benevolent works, of which our company would become the dispensing power. I appeal to the frankness of M. l'Abbé Gabriel, begging him to declare if he is or is not bound, not only by a most solemn oath but also by a deed perfectly legal, and drawn up and witnessed by M. Dumesnil, which I have here?"

"It is true," replied Gabriel.

"The deed was drawn up by me," added the notary.

"But Gabriel only gave you what belonged to him," exclaimed Dagobert; "this dear lad could not suppose that you would make use of him to plunder the others."

"Do me the favour, sir, to allow me to explain," replied the Père d'Aigrigny, courteously, "and then you shall have every attention."

Dagobert, with an effort, repressed a movement of painful impatience.

The R. P. continued:

"M. l'Abbé Gabriel, then, has, by his double engagement, by a deed and by an oath, confirmed his donation. Nay more," added Père d'Aigrigny, "when, to his excessive surprise, as well as our own, the enormous amount of this inheritance was disclosed, M. l'Abbé Gabriel, true to his extreme generosity, so far from repenting of his gift, did, as we may say, again consecrate it by a pious movement of gratitude towards Providence; for M. le Notaire will remember, no doubt, that, after having earnestly embraced M. l'Abbé Gabriel, and exclaimed that he was, in charity, a second Saint Vincent de Paul, I took him by the hand, and we thus knelt together to thank Heaven for having inspired him with the thought

of making these immense riches subservient to the still greater glory of the Lord."

"That is true," replied Gabriel, frankly; "so long as I only was concerned, in spite of a moment of extreme surprise, caused by the revelation of a fortune so immense, I did not think of reclaiming the donation I made so freely."

"It was at this moment," resumed the Père d'Aigrigny, "that the hour at which the succession was to close struck. M. l'Abbé Gabriel, being the only heir present, was necessarily and perforce the sole and legitimate possessor of this enormous property, — immense, unquestionably, — and I, in my charity, rejoice that it is so immense; for, thanks to it, much misery will now have succour, many tears will now be dried up. At this moment this gentleman suddenly appears, (and Père d'Aigrigny pointed to Dagobert), and under a mistake, which I excuse from the bottom of my soul, and with which I am sure he will hereafter reproach himself, assails me with threat and menace, and accuses me of having concealed, I know not when, I know not what person's relatives, in order to prevent them from being here at the proper hour."

"Yes, I do accuse you of this infamy!" exclaimed the soldier, exasperated at the calmness and audacity of the R. P. "Yes, and I will!"

"Once more, sir, I entreat you be so good as to allow me to continue, — you shall have your reply," said P. d'Aigrigny, humbly, and in soft and honied tones.

"Yes, I will reply, and confound you!" cried Dagobert.

"Be silent, father, be silent!" said Agricola; "you shall speak presently."

The soldier held his tongue.

The P. d'Aigrigny then went on with increased assurance:

"Unquestionably, if there be any other heirs than M.

l'Abbé Gabriel, it is a sad thing for them that they did not present themselves here before the final moment. Yes, if instead of defending the cause of the wretched and needy, I was defending my own interests, I should be far from taking advantage of this result due to chance alone. But, as the representative of a large family of poor brethren, I am compelled to insist upon my full claims to this inheritance, and I doubt not but M. le Notaire will admit the validity of my rights by putting me into immediate possession of that to which I am legally and fairly entitled."

"My business," said the notary, in a tone expressive of deep emotion, "is to carry out, as fully as I can, the desire of the testator. M. l'Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont alone appeared to claim within the given time for keeping the succession open; the act of donation is strictly according to law in every respect. I have, therefore, no grounds for refusing to place the person on whom he has bestowed the fortune recently acquired by him in possession of all the funds thereunto belonging."

At these words Samuel hid his face between his hands, while confessing, with a deep groan, that, however contrary to his wishes was the decision of the notary, it was still in strict accordance with the rigour of the law.

"But, surely," cried Dagobert, addressing the notary, "you do not — you cannot — mean thus tamely to suffer two poor orphan girls to be despoiled of their rights? I address you in the name of their father — their mother — I swear to you, on my honour, the honour of a soldier, that advantage has been taken of the weakness and confidence of my wife to place the two daughters of Maréchal Simon in a convent, in order to prevent my being able to produce them here this morning. In truth of what I advance, I can assure you I have already been to lay my complaint before a magistrate."

"Well," replied the notary, "and what did he say in reply?"

"That my deposition was not sufficient to warrant his removing the young persons from the convent in which they had been placed, but that the matter should be investigated."

"Yes," added Agricola, "the same answer was made to the application respecting Mlle. de Cardoville, who, under a false charge of insanity, is forcibly detained in a private madhouse; notwithstanding that this young lady (who has also claims in the inheritance to be divided to-day) is in full possession of her sense and reason. I took the same steps in her behalf my father employed for the release of the daughters of Maréchal Simon."

"Well?" inquired the notary.

"Unfortunately, sir," answered Agricola, "I received a similar reply to my father's; to the effect that my deposition was not sufficient to warrant any decided measures, that my testimony was not enough to obtain an order for the young lady's freedom, but that the affair should be taken into consideration."

At this moment Bathsheba, having heard a ringing at the outer gate, at a sign from Samuel quitted the Red Chamber.

The notary then, addressing Agricola and his father, said:

"Far be it from me, my good sirs, to throw the smallest imputation on the truth and good feeling which, I doubt not, you possess; at the same time, I must candidly state that I do not find in what you have just stated, borne out as it is by no testimony but your own, sufficient grounds for staying the legal course of events; it even appearing, by your own accounts, that the judicial authorities to whom you applied did not consider themselves warranted in acting upon your simple attestations; merely replying to your appeal by promises of making the necessary inquiries as to facts, and then consulting as to the means to be pursued. Now I put it to you, my good sirs, how can I in conscience pre-

sume to do that which duly authorised magistrates felt their power unequal to attempt?"

"You can, — you ought!" answered Dagobert, firmly. "Both justice and honour require it!"

"Such, sir, may be your opinion, but, according to my own view of the case, I consider I am obeying the strictest dictates of justice and honour in scrupulously and faithfully executing the last wishes of a dying man; besides, there are other means open for you. If the persons for whom you are concerned conceive themselves in any way aggrieved, they may institute proceedings against the parties in favour of whom M. Gabriel de Rennepont has resigned his succession; but, in the meanwhile, it becomes my positive duty to place the person on whom M. Gabriel de Rennepont has bestowed the property in immediate possession of all the monies and valuables thereunto appertaining. I should commit a great dereliction of my legal duty were I to act otherwise."

These observations on the part of the notary seemed so completely in accordance with the rigorous injunctions of the law, that Samuel, Dagobert, and Agricola remained speechless with grief and unavailing regret.

Gabriel, who had been buried in deep thought, seemed, after a little while, to form a desperate resolution, and, addressing the notary in a firm voice, said:

"Since it appears, sir, that the law is in this case powerless to support the right cause, I find myself obliged to have recourse to extremities; but before doing so, I, for the last time, inquire of M. d'Aigrigny if he will be contented to receive my portion alone of the fortune this day to be divided, upon condition that the other parts of the inheritance may be permitted to remain in safe hands until those who now claim to be admitted as participators shall have made good their title to share in it?"

"To this proposition," said D'Aigrigny, "I must reply as I have already done. It is not an affair which con-

cerns me individually, but the immense interests of charity and benevolence are at stake; and I am, therefore, compelled to refuse this offer on the part of M. Gabriel de Rennepont, as well as to remind him of his various engagements and undertakings."

"Then, sir, you reject the arrangement I propose?" said Gabriel, in a voice of powerful emotion.

"The voice of charity compels me so to do."

"You absolutely refuse?"

"I reflect upon all the good works that may be effected by means of this wealth, and how greatly it may be the means of promoting the glory and honour of God; and I feel neither the inclination nor the courage to diminish it by any concessions."

"Then, sir," resumed the young priest, in a voice of intense agitation, "since you drive me to it, I revoke my donation; I disposed only of that which I considered as my own to bestow. I had no intention of giving away that which belonged to others."

"Have a care, sir," said D'Aigrigny, "or I shall be obliged to remind you that I have in my possession your solemnly written and formal oath."

"You can only tell me that of which I am well aware, sir; namely, that you hold a paper in which I solemnly vowed never to revoke this donation under any pretext whatever, under penalty of incurring the hatred and contempt of every honest mind. Well, sir," said Gabriel, with profound bitterness, "so be it! I will expose myself to all the consequences of my perjury, which you are fully at liberty to proclaim wherever you please. I may be despised and abhorred by all, but there is One above who knows all, and will judge between us."

As the young priest uttered these words, he hastily repressed the indignant tears which rose to his eyes.

"Oh, fear not, my noble boy!" exclaimed Dagobert, in whose bosom hope once more sprung up; "all worthy

people will honour and respect you for daring to do what is just and right."

"You are right, dear brother!" said Agricola; "quite — quite right in acting thus!"

"M. le Notaire," at length chimed in the sharp voice of Rodin, — "M. le Notaire, have the goodness to make M. l'Abbé Gabriel understand that he may perjure himself as much and as often as he pleases, but that the civil code is less conveniently violated than a promise merely sworn to and solemnly worded."

"Proceed, sir!" said Gabriel.

"You must know, then," replied Rodin, "that a donation given from one party during his lifetime to another also living — similar to yours to M. the Rev. Father d'Aigrigny — is not revocable, except for three causes. I am right, I believe?" continued he, addressing the notary.

"Yes, sir, quite so," answered the latter; "three reasons alone permit the revocation of such a deed of gift."

"The first," said Rodin, "is in the event of issue being born after the execution of the said deed of gift; and I almost blush to be obliged to point out to M. Gabriel how completely he is precluded from any anticipation of that contingency. The second ground for setting aside the bequest would be the ingratitude of the recipient; now M. l'Abbé Gabriel may safely reckon upon our profound and eternal gratitude. The third plea for revoking such a gift would be a failure on the part of the receiving party in carrying out the wishes and desires of the bestower, or if direct proof can be given of misappropriation of the wealth entrusted. However unworthy may be the opinion M. Gabriel may suddenly have conceived of us, at least we are entitled to ask for time to prove to his entire satisfaction that the gift bestowed has been employed in means and undertakings having for their aim and end the great glory of the Most High."

"It now rests with you, M. le Notaire," observed D'Aigrigny, "to decide and declare whether M. l'Abbé Gabriel can revoke the donation so lately made."

Just as the notary was about to reply, Bathsheba entered, followed by two fresh personages, who presented themselves in the Red Chamber almost at the same moment.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A GOOD GENIUS.

The first of the two persons whose arrival had interrupted the notary's reply was Faringhea.

At the sight of this man's repulsive aspect, Samuel accosted him, and said:

"Who are you, sir?"

After having cast a piercing glance on Rodin, who shuddered imperceptibly, and then resumed his habitual impassiveness, Faringhea replied to Samuel:

"Prince Djalma arrived a little while ago from India, in order to be here to-day, as he was requested to do by the inscription on a medal which he wore around his neck."

"He, too!" exclaimed Gabriel, who, as we know, had been his companion in his voyage from India, from the Azores, where the ship coming from Alexandria had put in; "he, too, an heir! I remember now that, during our passage, the prince told me that his mother was of French extraction; but, doubtless, he thought it advisable to conceal from me the object of his voyage. Oh, he is a noble and courageous youth, the young Indian prince! Where is he?"

The Strangler cast another look on Rodin, and said to him, laying a slight emphasis on his words:

"I quitted the prince yesterday evening. He told me that, although he had a very great interest in being here, that yet it might happen that he should sacrifice that interest to other circumstances. I passed the night in

the same hôtel with him, and this morning when I went to his apartment they told me that he had already gone out. My friendship for him has made me come to this house, hoping that the information I could give as to the prince might, perhaps, not be useless."

Not saying a word as to the ambush into which he had fallen the previous evening, being silent with respect to the Rodin machinations against Djalma, and, above all, in attributing the absence of the prince to a voluntary cause, the Strangler wished evidently to serve the *socius*, relying that Rodin would recompense his discretion.

It is useless to say that Faringhea told a barefaced lie. After having contrived in the morning to escape from his prison by a marvellous display of cunning, skill, and boldness, he had hastened to the hôtel where he had left Djalma. There he had learnt that a man and woman of middle age and a respectable appearance, representing themselves as the relatives of the young Indian, had asked to see him, and, alarmed at the fearful somnolence in which he seemed plunged, they had conveyed him into a carriage in order to take him to their own house, and pay him the attention he required.

"It is much to be deplored," said the notary, "that this heir did not also present himself; but he is, unfortunately, deprived of his rights to the share of the immense inheritance which we have met to arrange."

"Oh, it is a question of an immense inheritance, is it?" said Faringhea, looking steadfastly at Rodin, who prudently turned away his face.

The second of the two persons we have mentioned entered at this moment.

It was the father of Marshal Simon,—a tall old man, still active and vigorous for his years; his hair was white and short; and his face, which was healthily coloured, betokened at once ability, amenity, and firmness.

Agricola went up to him with a rapid step.

"What, you here, M. Simon?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, my lad," said the marshal's father, shaking Agricola cordially by the hand; "I have this moment come off a journey. M. Hardy was to have been here in a matter of an inheritance, as he supposes, but as he is still absent from Paris for some time, he has authorised me to —"

"He, too, an heir! M. François Hardy?" exclaimed Agricola, interrupting the old workman.

"Why, how pale and disturbed you seem, my boy! What ails you?" inquired the marshal's father, looking about him with astonishment. "What is the matter here?"

"The matter here? Why, one that concerns your little girls, whom they are seeking to despoil!" exclaimed Dagobert, despairingly, and going towards the superintendent. "And it was to be present at this infamous proceeding that I have brought them from the further limits of Siberia."

"You!" exclaimed the old workman, endeavouring to call to mind the features of the soldier. "Who, then, are you?"

"Dagobert!"

"You — you — so generously devoted to my son!" exclaimed the marshal's father; and he clasped the old soldier's hand between his own with great warmth. "But did you not allude to Simon's daughter?"

"Daughters! for he is more happy than he yet knows of," said Dagobert; "the poor dear girls are twins."

"And where are they?"

"In a convent."

"In a convent?"

"Yes, through the treachery of that man, who, by detaining them there, has disinherited them."

"What man?"

"The Marquis d'Aigrigny."

"My son's most deadly enemy!" exclaimed the old

workman, casting a look of hatred on the Père d'Aigrigny, whose boldness did not forsake him.

"And this is not all," added Agricola. "M. Hardy, my worthy and excellent employer, is also unfortunately deprived of his claim to this immense inheritance."

"What say you?" exclaimed Marshal Simon's father. "But M. Hardy was ignorant that this was an affair of such deep interest and importance to him, and departed hastily to rejoin a friend who sent for him urgently."

At each of these successive disclosures, Samuel felt his despair increase; but he could only vent his feelings in groans, for, unfortunately, the will of the testator was formal.

Père d'Aigrigny, impatient to put an end to this scene, which cruelly embarrassed him, in spite of his apparent calm, said to the notary, in a grave and emphatic tone:

"Sir, all this surely must have an end. If calumny could reach me, I would reply to it triumphantly by the facts as they appear before us. Why attribute to hateful plots the absence of the heirs in whose names this soldier and his son make such injurious accusations? Why should their absence be more unaccountable than that of this young Indian, than that of M. Hardy, who, as his man of business says, was ignorant of the importance of the interest which called him hither? Is it not more probable that the daughters of M. the Marshal Simon, and Mlle. de Cardoville, have not been able, from some equally natural causes, to present themselves here this morning? Once again I say that this has gone on too long, and I believe that the notary thinks as I do, that this revelation of fresh heirs really can effect no change in the question which I had the honour to put to him just now; that is, that, as representative of the poor, to whom M. the Abbé Gabriel has made a gift of all he possessed, I remain, in spite of his tardy and illegal opposition, sole possessor of the property; which I have already pledged myself, and I repeat that pledge

in the face of all at this solemn moment, to employ for the greater glory of the Lord. Will you, therefore, sir, as the official notary, at once gave a decisive opinion, and terminate a scene which must be most painful to all?"

"Sir," replied the notary, in a solemn voice, "on my soul and conscience, in the name of justice and law, as faithful and impartial executor of the last wishes of M. Marius de Rennepont, I declare that by the act of donation of M. l'Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont, you are — you, M. l'Abbé d'Aigrigny — the sole possessor of this property, of which at this moment I put you in possession, in order that you may dispose of it according to the conditions of the donor."

These words, pronounced with emphasis and seriousness, utterly destroyed the last and vague hopes which the defenders of the heirs could have left to them.

Samuel became paler than ever, and grasped the hand of Bathsheba, who stood beside him, convulsively, whilst big tears flowed slowly down the cheeks of the old couple.

Dagobert and Agricola were plunged in deepest grief, struck by the reasoning of the notary, who said that he could give no more credit or authority to their claims than the magistrates had done, and they felt that they had not a shadow of a hope remaining.

Gabriel suffered most acutely of any person. He experienced the most bitter remorse, when he reflected that by his blindness he had been the cause and involuntary instrument of this abominable spoliation.

Thus when the notary, after having assured himself of the correctness and amount of the securities enclosed in the cedar coffer, said to M. Père d'Aigrigny:

"Take possession of this casket, sir!"

Gabriel exclaimed, with the bitter tone of deep despair:

"Alas! It would seem that in these circumstances an

inexorable fatality weighs down all who are worthy of interest, affection, and respect. Oh, my God," added the young priest, clasping his hands fervently; "your sovereign justice cannot permit the triumph of such iniquity!"

It would seem that Heaven heard the missionary's prayer. Scarcely had he spoken than a singular circumstance occurred.

Rodin, without awaiting the conclusion of Gabriel's invocation, had, according to the authority of the notary, taken the casket in his arms, unable at the same time to repress a loud aspiration of joy and triumph.

At this moment, too, when Père d'Aigrigny and the *socius* believed themselves at last possessors of the treasure, the door of the apartment in which they had heard the clock strike suddenly opened.

A female appeared on the threshold.

At the sight of her Gabriel uttered a loud cry, and remained thunderstruck.

Samuel and Bathsheba clasped their hands and fell on their knees. The two Israelites felt reanimated by an inexplicable hope.

All the other actors in this scene remained motionless with astonishment.

Rodin himself retreated two paces, and replaced the casket on the table with a trembling hand.

Although there was nothing but what was very natural in this incident, — a woman appearing on the threshold of a door which she had just opened, — yet there was a moment of silence — profound — solemn. Every breast was oppressed — palpitating. In fact all, at the sight of this female, experienced a surprise mingled with a deadly fear — indefinable anguish — for this female appeared the living original of the portrait placed in this salon a hundred and fifty years previously.

There was the same head-dress, the same gown, with

its long hanging folds, the same features, impressed with that deep and resigned sorrow.

This female advanced slowly, and without appearing to perceive the profound impression caused by her appearance.

She approached a *secrétaire* inlaid with brass and silver, pressed a concealed spring hidden amidst the gilt mouldings, and a small drawer sprang out, whence she took an envelope of sealed parchment; then advancing to the table, she placed this paper before the notary, who, till then mute and motionless, took it mechanically.

After having cast a long look, melancholy but most sweet, at Gabriel, who seemed fascinated at her presence, this female went towards the door of the vestibule, which was open.

As she passed by Samuel and Bathsheba, who were still kneeling, she paused for a moment, bent her beautiful head towards the old couple, looked at them with tender solicitude, and then, after having given them her hands to kiss, she disappeared as slowly as she had appeared, having cast a parting look at Gabriel.

The departure of this female seemed to break the charm under which all present had remained for some minutes.

Gabriel first broke silence by murmuring, in a broken tone:

"It is she! she again! — here — in this house!"

"Who — she — brother?" asked Agricola, alarmed at the paleness and almost distracted air of the missionary; for the smith, though he had not yet observed the singular resemblance of this female to the portrait, shared, without being able to account for it, in the general amazement.

Dagobert and Faringhea were in a similar state of mind.

"Who is this female?" continued Agricola, taking Gabriel's hand, which was damp and cold.

"Look!" replied the young priest; "it is more than a century and a half since those portraits were placed there."

And he pointed to the two paintings before which he was then sitting.

At Gabriel's movement, Agricola, Dagobert, and Faringhea raised their eyes towards the two pictures placed on each side of the mantelpiece.

All three exclaimed at once:

"It is she! The same woman!" cried the astonished smith; "and her portrait has been here for a hundred and fifty years!"

"What do I see? — the friend and emissary of Marshal Simon!" said Dagobert, contemplating the portrait of the man. "Yes, it is really the face of him who came to find us in Siberia last year. Ah, I recognise him by his sad and soft look, as well as by his eyebrows, which unite in one over his brow."

"My eyes do not deceive me, — no! It is indeed the man with his eyebrows arched into one, that we strangled and buried in the banks of the Ganges!" muttered Faringhea, with a shudder of fear. "The man whom one of the sons of Bohwanie last year, at Java, in the ruins of Tchandi, declared he had met after his murder, near one of the gates of Bombay. This accursed man, who, as they said, left everywhere after him death in his traces! And this painting was done a century and a half ago!"

And the Strangler, as well as Dagobert and Agricola, could not take his eyes off from this remarkable portrait.

"What a mysterious resemblance!" thought Père d'Aigrigny; and then, as if struck with a sudden idea, he said to Gabriel, "But this woman is the same who saved your life in America?"

"It is the same," replied Gabriel, shuddering; "and still she told me that she was going towards the north

of America," added the young priest, speaking to himself.

"How then could she be in this house?" asked Père d'Aigrigny, addressing himself to Samuel. "Answer me, guardian, was this woman brought here before us, or by you?"

"I entered here the first of any present and alone, when, for the first time for a century and a half, the door was opened," said Samuel, gravely.

"Then how do you account for this female's presence here?" added Père d'Aigrigny.

"I seek not to explain," said the Jew. "I see, and seeing believe; and even venture now to hope," continued he, regarding Bathsheba with an indefinable expression.

"Still it is your duty to account for the presence of this female among us," said D'Aigrigny, over whose mind a vague sense of uneasiness was rapidly stealing. "Again, I ask you, who is she? and why is she here?"

"All I can tell you, sir, is that, according to what I have heard from my father, there are underground communications from this house to the most distant parts of the neighbourhood."

"Ah, then all is easily explained," said D'Aigrigny. "We have now only to ascertain what motive this person could possibly have had in thus introducing herself into the house. As for her singular resemblance to the portrait, that is a mere freak of nature."

Rodin had participated in the general astonishment at the appearance of the mysterious female; but when he saw her deliver a sealed packet to the notary, the *socius* ceased to trouble himself respecting the strangeness of her coming, and thought only of quitting the place as quickly as possible, in company with the casket containing the treasure, now legally and incontestably the property of the Company of Jesus. An instinctive

dread made him fear the contents of the sealed envelope delivered to the notary, who still mechanically grasped it in his hands.

The deep amazement and profound silence which prevailed appeared to the *socius* to afford a favourable opportunity of escaping from the room unobserved. He therefore lightly touched the elbow of D'Aigrigny, explaining by a significant gesture what he was about to do; then, placing the cedar casket beneath his arm, proceeded towards the door.

"One moment, sir, if you please," said Samuel, rising and intercepting his passage. "I must request M. le Notaire to examine the paper just put into his hands; you can leave the room after he has so done."

"But, sir," said Rodin, striving to force his way out, "as the point in dispute has been finally decided in favour of M. d'Aigrigny, I will thank you to stand aside."

"And I tell you, sir," returned the old man, in a loud and vehement tone, "that I will not suffer that casket to be removed out of this room until M. le Notaire has taken cognisance of the paper just delivered to him."

Samuel's words and manner, so expressive of determined opposition to Rodin's carrying off the treasure, attracted such universal attention that the *socius* found himself most unwillingly compelled to return to the table; but, while passing the Jew, bestowed upon him such a withering look of implacable hatred as made the old man shudder, spite of the natural firmness of his disposition. The notary, in compliance with Samuel's desire, proceeded carefully to examine the envelope of the sealed packet.

"Merciful heavens!" exclaimed he. "What is this I see? But so much the better!"

As these words escaped the notary, all eyes were turned inquiringly towards him.

"Oh, proceed, sir, — I conjure you to proceed!" cried

Samuel, clasping his hands. "Perhaps my presentiments will be realised."

"Pray, sir," said D'Aigrigny, beginning to experience the same disquietude as Rodin, "allow me to inquire what paper is that you are so anxiously perusing?"

"A codicil," replied the notary. "A codicil which leaves everything unsettled for the present."

"How, sir!" exclaimed D'Aigrigny, furiously, and approaching the notary. "Everything left undecided! And by what right, pray?"

"Impossible!" added Rodin. "We shall oppose any such delay."

"Gabriel! Father! Listen!" cried Agricola. "All is not lost, there are still hopes. Gabriel, do you hear what the notary says? There are yet hopes for us."

"What is this?" asked the young priest, hastily rising, and as though unable to trust to the evidence of his senses.

"Gentlemen," said the notary, "I will thank you to attend while I read aloud the superscription to this packet, which changes, or at least defers, all former testamentary dispositions."

"Gabriel, my brother," shouted Agricola, throwing himself into the arms of the missionary, "everything is deferred, and nothing lost!"

"Listen, gentlemen," said the notary; and then, in a clear and audible voice he read as follows:

"This is a codicil which (for reasons that will be detailed within) adjourns or prorogues, till the first of June, 1832, the dispositions mentioned in the will made by me this day at one o'clock; without, however, changing or destroying any of the testamentary gifts or obligations therein stated, but merely deferring their fulfilment for the time specified.

"I desire that the house may be again closed, and the capital, with all other monies and securities, be left in

the hands of their present depositary, in order that they may be fairly and equitably divided on the first of June, among all such of my family as shall make good their claims.

"MARIUS DE RENNEPONT.

"*Villetaneuse, this* 13*th February*, 1682,
"*at* 11 *o'clock in the evening.*"

"I protest against this codicil!" cried D'Aigrigny, livid with rage and despair. "The female who gave it into the hands of the notary is believed by us to be unworthy of credit, — this codicil is forged!"

"You are mistaken, sir," said the notary, sternly; "I have carefully and closely examined the two signatures to this paper and the first will, and I am persuaded they are the same. Besides, the remark I made some time since respecting those heirs not now present, is equally applicable to yourself. You are at liberty to dispute the authenticity of this document; but everything must remain in abeyance, and as not having yet come to pass, — the period for deciding the claims of those presenting themselves as heirs being now removed to the first of June, a distance of three months and a half."

By the time the notary had spoken these words, the nails of Rodin were streaming with blood, and for the first time his pale, corpse-like lips were coloured with crimson.

"Mercy has interposed!" cried Gabriel, kneeling and clasping his hands with religious fervour, while his beaming countenance was turned towards heaven. "My prayer has been answered; sovereign justice would not thus permit the wicked to prosper, or their iniquity to prevail against the innocent."

"What are you saying, my dear boy?" asked Dagobert, who, bewildered by the sudden joy which had thus broken in upon them, scarcely comprehended the import of the disputed codicil.

"All is put off, father!" exclaimed the smith; "the period for the presentation of the heirs is now fixed three months and a half from this period. And, now that these persons (pointing to Rodin and D'Aigrigny) are unmasked, there is nothing more to be feared from them; we shall be on our guard against their machinations, and the orphans, Mlle. de Cardoville, my worthy employer, M. Hardy, and the young Indian will all receive their just share."

We must renounce all attempts to paint the joy and rapturous delight of Gabriel, Agricola, Dagobert, the father of the Maréchal Simon, Samuel, and Bathsheba.

Faringhea alone remained gloomy and silent before the portrait of the man with the remarkable eyebrows.

The rage, the impotent fury, of D'Aigrigny and Rodin, at seeing Samuel resume the possession of the cedar casket, is beyond the power of our pen to describe; we renounce it as a task of utter impossibility.

By the advice of the notary, who took the codicil with him, in order that it might be opened with all legal formality, Samuel determined, as more prudent, to place in the Bank of France the immense treasures of which he was known to be the guardian.

While the generous hearts, so lately bowed down by grief and despair, overflowed with joyful hope and happiness, D'Aigrigny and Rodin quitted the house, carrying rage and almost madness in their hearts.

As the reverend Father d'Aigrigny ascended his carriage, he commanded himself sufficiently to say, in a tone of assumed calmness, to the servant who stood waiting to close the door of the vehicle, "Drive to the Hôtel de Saint-Dizier!" Then, overcome and utterly prostrate in mind and hope, he threw himself back on the cushions, and, covering his face with his hands, uttered deep and heavy groans; while Rodin, seated with him, surveyed,

with mingled curiosity and contempt, the miserable and dejected creature now before him.

"The poor pusillanimous coward!" said he, mentally; "he despairs, while I —"

At the end of a quarter of an hour the carriage reached the Rue de Babylone and drove into the courtyard of the Hôtel de Saint-Dizier.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FIRST LAST, AND THE LAST FIRST.

THE carriage of the Père d'Aigrigny reached the Hôtel de Saint-Dizier at a rapid pace.

During the time Rodin remained perfectly silent, contenting himself with looking at and listening to Père d'Aigrigny, who breathed forth the pains and agonies of his overthrow in a lengthened monologue, interspersed with exclamations, lamentations, and indignation at the pitiless blows of destiny which, in a moment, ruined the best founded hopes.

When the Père d'Aigrigny's carriage entered the courtyard, and stopped at the peristyle of the Hôtel de Saint-Dizier, the face of the princess might be seen through the glass of one of the windows, half concealed by the folds of a curtain. In her intense anxiety, she had placed herself there to see if it were the Abbé d'Aigrigny who had arrived. Still further, overlooking all ceremony, that great lady, whose demeanour was usually so reserved and formal, quitted the room hastily, and came down several of the stairs in order to meet Père d'Aigrigny, who was ascending them with an air of deep dejection.

The princess, when she saw the livid and depressed appearance of the R. Père's face, suddenly paused and turned pale, at once suspecting that all was lost. A rapid glance exchanged with her quondam lover left her no doubt on the result she had so much dreaded.

Rodin humbly followed the R. Père. Both, preceded by the princess, entered quickly into a private apartment.

The door closed. The princess, addressing the Père d'Aigrigny with intense anguish, exclaimed:

"What, then, has happened?"

Instead of replying to this question, the R. Père, his eyes sparkling with rage, his lips white, and his features convulsed, looked the princess full in the face, and said to her:

"Do you know the amount of this inheritance which we believed to amount to forty millions?" (1,600,000*l.*)

"I see now," replied the princess, "we have been deceived; this inheritance is reduced to nothing, — you have been working only for a great loss."

"Yes, we have worked for a great loss," replied the R. Père, his teeth clenched passionately, "an enormous loss! Why, the inheritance in question was not forty millions, but two hundred and twelve millions!"

"Two hundred and twelve millions!" repeated the princess, receding a step in utter amazement; "that is impossible."

"I saw them in actual securities in a casket, and checked by the notary."

"Two hundred and twelve millions!" repeated the astonished princess. "Why, that is an immense, a sovereign power! And you have given it up, — have not struggled, by every possible means, to the very last instant?"

"Madame, I did all I could, in spite of the treachery of Gabriel, who this very morning declared that he renounced us, — that he would dissociate himself from the company!"

"The ingrate!" said the princess.

"The act of donation which I had the precaution to have legalised by the notary was so formal, that, in spite of the assertions and claims of the savage soldier

and his son, the notary had actually put me in possession of this treasure."

"Two hundred and twelve millions!" repeated the princess, clasping her hands. "In truth, it is like a dream."

"Yes," replied Père d'Aigrigny, bitterly; "for us this possession has been a dream, for we have discovered a codicil which postpones for three months and a half all testamentary dispositions; but now the alarm is given, even by our own precautions, to the whole body of heirs. They know the vastness of the sum, are on their guard, and all is lost."

"Who, then, is the cursed creature who has made this codicil known?"

"A woman."

"What woman?"

"I do not know; but some wandering creature whom Gabriel declares he met in America, and who then saved his life."

"And how did this woman get there? How did she know the existence of this codicil?"

"I believe it was all concocted by that wretch of a Jew, the keeper of the house, whose family has been the depositary of the funds for three generations. No doubt he had some secret instructions in case it should be suspected that the heirs were kept back; for, in his will, this Marius de Rennepont anticipated that the company would keep watch over his descendants."

"But cannot you enter pleadings against the validity of this codicil?"

"Pleadings! What, at such a time as this? Pleadings in a matter of a will! Why, we should assuredly expose ourselves to a thousand clamours, without the certainty of success! It is already sufficiently injurious to us, that all these facts will be noised abroad. Ah, it is horrible; and at the very moment of success, after so much labour! an affair followed up so

carefully, so pertinaciously, for a hundred and fifty years!"

"Two hundred and twelve millions!" repeated the princess. "And it was not in a strange land that the Order would then have established itself, but in France itself — in the heart of France itself — with such vast resources!"

"Yes," responded Père d'Aigrigny, with bitterness; "and by education we should have got hold of the rising generation. It was, politically, of incalculable extent." Then, striking his foot angrily on the floor, he added, "I tell you it is enough to make one go mad with rage! An affair so skilfully, so sagaciously, so patiently, conducted!"

"Have you no hope, then?"

"The only one is, that this Gabriel does not retract his donation. That will be a considerable sum, — it will amount at least to thirty millions!"

"That is a vast sum; almost as much as you had expected. Why, then, do you despair?"

"Because it is evident Gabriel will appeal against this donation; however legal it may be, he will find some means of annulling it, now that he is free, has his eyes opened with respect to us, and is surrounded by his adopted family. I tell you all is lost; and there is not a shadow of a hope left. I even think it prudent to write to Rome, to obtain permission to leave Paris for a time. This city has become hateful to me."

"Yes, yes, I see it all; and there is not a hope left when you, my friend, resolve almost to fly."

And the Père d'Aigrigny remained completely overwhelmed, baffled, hopeless, unstrung. This heavy blow had broken every spring, every energy of his mind, and, crushed and annihilated, he flung himself into an armchair.

During this conversation Rodin had remained standing respectfully near the door, holding his old hat in his hand.

Two or three times, at certain passages in the conversation of Père d'Aigrigny and the princess, the cadaverous countenance of the *socius*, which appeared a prey to concentrated wrath, was slightly coloured, his flaccid eyelids becoming as red as if the blood had mounted to his head in consequence of a violent internal struggle; then his inexpressive face resumed its dull character.

"I must write to Rome instantly, to announce this defeat, which becomes an event of the highest importance, inasmuch as it destroys such immense hopes," said the Père d'Aigrigny, with a tone of despair.

The R. P. was still sitting; and pointing to a table he added, in an abrupt and altered voice:

"Write —!"

The *socius*, putting his hat on the ground, replied by a respectful bow to the order of the R. P.; and with his neck stooping, his head lowered, and sidelong step, he went to seat himself in the chair placed in front of a bureau; then taking pen and paper, he, silent and motionless, awaited the dictation of his superior.

"By your leave, princess?" said the Père d'Aigrigny to Madame de Saint-Dizier.

She replied by an impatient gesture, which seemed to reproach Père d'Aigrigny with his ceremonious request.

The R. P. bowed, and then dictated as follows, with a low and half stifled voice:

"All our hopes, which had become almost certainties, have been suddenly crushed. The Rennepont affair, in spite of every care and all skill bestowed up to this period, has completely and hopelessly failed. The turn which matters have taken is, unfortunately, even worse than a want of success; it is an event the more disastrous for the company, whose rights to the property were decidedly and morally evident, for they had been fraudulently withheld at a time when a confiscation had been made in favour of the company; but I have at least the

consciousness of having done everything, up to the last moment, to defend and assure our rights. But, I repeat, we must consider this important affair as absolutely and for ever lost, and think no more about it — "

The Père d'Aigrigny dictated this with his back turned to Rodin.

At the abrupt movement which the *socius* made in rising, and throwing his pen down on the table instead of continuing to write, the R. Père turned around, and looking at Rodin with profound astonishment, said to him:

"Well! What are you about?"

"There must be an end to this, incompetent and impotent man!" said Rodin, speaking to himself, and advancing towards the mantelpiece, slowly.

"What! you leave your seat, and do not go on writing?" said the R. P., much astonished. And then turning to the princess, who participated in his surprise, he added, with a contemptuous glance at the *socius*, "Really, he has lost his wits!"

"Excuse him," replied Madame de Saint-Dizier; "it is, no doubt, the anxiety which the failure of this affair has caused him!"

"Thank the princess, return to your place, and continue your writing," said Père d'Aigrigny to Rodin, in a tone of disdainful contempt, and pointing to the table imperiously with his finger.

The *socius*, entirely regardless of this new order, came close to the fireplace, to which he turned his back, elevated his drooping shoulders, stood erect on his legs, struck the carpet with the heel of his thick and oiled shoes, crossed his hands behind the skirts of his old greasy coat, and, raising his head, looked sternly at Père d'Aigrigny.

The *socius* had not uttered a word, but his hideous features, at the moment slightly suffused, revealed fully and instantaneously such a consciousness of his superi-

ority, and so sovereign a contempt for Père d'Aigrigny, — an audacity so calm, and as it were so serene, that the R. P. and the princess were confounded.

They felt singularly controlled by, and under the domination of, this little old man, so ugly and so squalid.

Père d'Aigrigny knew too well the customs of his Order to believe his humble secretary capable of so suddenly assuming these airs of utter superiority without motive, or, rather, without positive right; late, too late, the R. P. discovered that this subordinate might be at the same time a spy, and a sort of experienced auxiliary, who, by the constitution of the Order, had power and authority in certain urgent cases to supersede and temporarily replace the unfit, with whom he was placed, in the first instance, as surveillant.

The R. P. was not mistaken: from the general to the lowest rural subordinate, even the very heads of colleges, all the superior members of the company, have near them, often concealed in functions apparently the most humble, men fully competent to fulfil their duties at a moment's notice; and who, thus instructed, correspond continually and directly with Rome.

From the instant when Rodin had thus planted himself, the usually haughty demeanour of Père d'Aigrigny changed suddenly; and, although it cost him an enormous effort, he yet said with a hesitation of manner, filled with deference:

"You have, doubtless, the power to command me — me, who but now commanded you?"

Rodin, without reply, drew from his thick and shabby pocketbook a folded paper stamped on both sides, on which were written some lines in Latin.

After having read this, Père d'Aigrigny lifted it respectfully, reverentially, to his lips, and then, restoring it to Rodin, made him a low bow.

When Père d'Aigrigny raised his head, it was purple

with spite and shame. Notwithstanding his habit of passive obedience, and immutable respect for the commands of his Order, he experienced a bitter and violent sensation of anger at finding himself so suddenly deposed from his superiority. This was not all. Although for a very long time all thoughts of gallantry between himself and Madame de Saint-Dizier had ceased, still she was not the less a female in his eyes; and to undergo this degrading check before a woman was doubly galling to him, who, despite his Order, had not yet entirely cast off every sentiment of a man of the world.

Besides, the princess, instead of appearing pained, agonised, at the sudden metamorphosis of a superior into a subaltern, and from a subaltern into a superior, looked at Rodin with a sort of curiosity, mingled with interest.

As a woman, and a woman, too, inordinately ambitious, seeking to attach to herself all powerful influences, the princess loved such contrast. She found it really curious and interesting to see this man almost in rags, mean, and ignobly ugly, and but just now the most humble of subordinates, spring at once into an elevation of mastery, with all the dignity which his newly assumed position acquired, controlling the Père d'Aigrigny, a nobleman by birth, elegant in his manners, and formerly the most distinguished man in all societies. From that instant, as an important personage, Rodin completely effaced the Père d'Aigrigny in the mind of the princess.

The first sentiment of humiliation passed, the R. P. d'Aigrigny, although his pride was bleeding from the quick, evinced the contrary, by a ready sacrifice of self-love and worldly wisdom, his desire to redouble his courtesy towards Rodin, become his superior by so sudden a stroke of fortune.

But the ex-*socius*, incapable of appreciating, or rather of recognising, these delicate shadings, established himself at once coarsely and imperiously in his new position;

not by the reaction of wounded pride, but by the consciousness of his actual value, — a long connection with Père d'Aigrigny had revealed to him his inferiority.

"You have thrown away the pen," said Père d'Aigrigny to Rodin, with extreme deference, "whilst I was dictating to you this despatch for Rome. Will you favour me by informing me in what respect I have acted wrongly?"

"In a moment," said Rodin, in his sharp and cutting tone. "For a long time, although this affair appeared to me wholly beyond your abilities, I refrained; yet what blunders, what poverty of invention! How coarse the means employed to reach the wished-for end!"

"I can hardly comprehend your reproaches," responded the Père d'Aigrigny, softly, although a secret bitterness pierced through his affected submission. "Was not success certain but for the codicil? Have you not yourself contributed to the measures for which you now blame me?"

"You then commanded, and I obeyed; and, moreover, you were on the point of succeeding, not because of the means you employed, but in spite of those means, if clumsy conduct and disgusting stupidity — "

"Sir, you are severe," said Père d'Aigrigny.

"I am just. Did it require any vast ability to shut a person up in a room and then to double-lock the door? Eh? Well, what else have you done? Why, nothing! The daughters of General Simon? Imprisoned at Leipsic, shut up in a convent in Paris. Adrienne de Cardoville? Shut up. Couche-tout-Nud? In prison. Djalma? A narcotic. The only piece of ingenuity, and a thousand times more sure, because it operated morally and not materially, was employed to get M. Hardy away. As to your other arrangements — pooh! bad, uncertain, dangerous! Why? Because they were violent, and people reply to violence by violence. Then it is no longer the struggle of clever, skilful, resolute men, who see the road they take though it is in shadow, but it is a strug-

gle of wrestlers in open daylight. What! Why, as well as acting incessantly, we ought, beyond everything, to keep ourselves out of sight in the background; and yet you hit upon nothing more clever than to call attention to us by means of most horrible coarseness and disturbance! By way of being more mysterious, it is the guard, the commissary of police and gaolers, whom you select as your accomplices! It is really pitiable, sir; and a remarkable success alone could excuse you for such an amount of poverty-stricken invention; but this success you have not acquired!"

"Sir!" said Père d'Aigrigny, deeply wounded, for Madame de Saint-Dizier could not disguise her admiration at the plain and cutting language of Rodin, and looked at her old admirer with an air which seemed to say, he is right! "Sir, you are more than severe in your judgment; and, in spite of the deference due to you, I tell you I am not used to such language."

"There are many other things, *ma foi*, which you are not used to," said Rodin, harshly, and interrupting the R. P.; "but you will get used to them. Up to this time you have had a false estimate of your own value; there are in you still some remains of the old leaven of the soldier and the man of the world, which work upon you, and deprive your reason of the coolness, clearness, and penetration which ought to characterise it: you have been a gay, gallant officer, all fine and scented; you have run through a course of war, fêtes, pleasures, and women, — they have used up the better half of you. You will now never be anything but a subaltern. You have been tried and found wanting. You will always lack that vigour, that concentration of mind, which controls men and events. If I have this vigour, this concentration of mind — and I have it! — do you know why? It is because, solely devoted to the service of our company, I have always been ugly, dirty, and one-minded — yes, one-minded; and in that consists my power."

As he said these words with proud cynicism, Rodin was really fearful to look upon. The Princesse de Saint-Dizier thought him almost handsome in his boldness and energy. The Père d'Aigrigny, feeling himself mastered in an unconquerable manner by this fiendish being, resolved to try one last effort at revolt, and exclaimed:

"Well, sir, these vauntings are no proofs of worth and power; we shall see you at work?"

"You shall see me," replied Rodin, calmly; "and do you know what work?" (Rodin was partial to this interrogative formula.) "At that which you have thrown up in so dastardly a manner!"

"What do you say?" exclaimed the Princesse de Saint-Dizier; for Père d'Aigrigny, stupefied at Rodin's audacity, could not utter a syllable.

"I say," replied Rodin, slowly, — "I say that I will undertake to carry out the affair of the Rennepont inheritance with success, though you consider it as desperate!"

"You?" exclaimed Père d'Aigrigny, "you — ?"

"I!"

"But all our plans are unmasked!"

"So much the better; we shall be compelled to invent others more skilful."

"But they will mistrust you!"

"So much the better; difficult enterprises are the most sure!"

"How? Do you hope to make Gabriel consent not to revoke his donation, which it is possible may, moreover, be illegal?"

"I will bring into the coffers of the company the two hundred and twelve millions which they seek to defraud us of. Is that clear?"

"It is as clear as that it is impossible."

"I tell you — and mind I say it — it is quite possible; and I tell you it must be possible. Do you hear? You do not understand with your mental shortsighted-

ness!" exclaimed Rodin, becoming so animated that his cadaverous features were suffused with red. "You do not understand that the thing is no longer doubtful either; the two hundred and twelve millions will be ours, and then we are assured of the reëstablishment of our sovereign influence in France; for with such sums in these times of venality a government is to be bought; and if its purchase is too dear, or it is troublesome, we can kindle a civil war and overthrow it, and restore legitimacy, which, after all, is our true middle course, and which, sooner than anything else, would strengthen and consolidate us."

"That is evident," said the princess, clasping her hands in admiration.

"If, on the contrary," continued Rodin, "these two hundred and twelve millions remain in the hands of the Rennepont family, it will be our ruin, our annihilation, — it is to create a stock of inflexible, implacable enemies. You have not yet comprehended the execrable wishes of this Rennepont on the subject of this association, which he desires to be formed, and which, by an unheard-of fatality, his accursed race may marvellously realise! Only think of the immense power which will concentrate itself around these millions! It is the Marshal Simon acting in the name of his daughters; that is to say, the man of the people made a duke, without, perhaps, being vain of it, which assures his influence with the masses; for the military spirit and incarnate Buonapartism still represent the highest honour and national glory in the eyes of the people. Then we have this François Hardy, the liberal, independent, enlightened employer, the type of the extensive manufacturer, bent on the progress and well-being of the working classes! Then there is Gabriel, the good priest, as they call him, the primitive apostle of the Gospel, the representative of the democracy of the church, as opposed to the aristocracy of the church, — the poor village curate against the rich bishop; that is

to say, in their jargon, the labourer of the holy vineyard against the idle pluralist; the born propagator of all ideas of fraternity, emancipation, and progress, as they also call him; and that, not in the name of any revolutionary or demagogical system of politics, but in the name of Christ, in the name of a religion all charity, love, and peace, — to speak as they speak. Next, we have Adrienne de Cardoville, the type of elegance, grace, and beauty, the priestess of all the passions of the senses, which she pretends to spiritualise by force of refining, cultivating, and training them. I do not speak to you of her mind, her audacity, you know these too well. Thus, nothing can be so dangerous for us as she may become, — she, a patrician by blood, a democrat in heart, and a poet in imagination. Then comes the Prince Djalma, chivalrous, bold, and ready for everything, because he does not know anything of civilised life; implacable in his hatred as in his affection, a powerful instrument for the hand that knows how to wield him. In fact, there is not one in this detestable family, down to the wretch Couche-tout-Nud, who, isolated, is insignificant, but who, powerful, elevated, regenerated, by contact with these generous and expansive dispositions, as they call them, may have a large share in the influences of this association, as representing the artisan. Now, do you believe that if all these persons, already exasperated against us, because, they say, we seek to spoliate them, follow out — and they will follow out, I will answer for it — the hateful wishes of this Rennepont; do you think that if they associate in all their strength, and all the power with which this enormous fortune invests them, which will add a hundred-fold to their strength; do you believe that if they declare a war of extermination against us and our principles, that they will not become the most dangerous antagonists that we have ever had? But I tell you, I say that the company has never been more seriously assailed; yes, and it

is now a question of its life or death. At this moment we have nothing worth defending ourselves; but we must attack, in order to annihilate, this accursed race of the Renneponts, and obtain possession of these millions."

At this picture, presented by Rodin with feverish animation, the more impressive and potent as it was so rare, the princess and the Père d'Aigrigny looked at him amazed and overcome.

"I confess," said the R. P. to Rodin, "I had not thought of all the dangerous consequences of this association for good, as advised by M. de Rennepont; but I think that these heirs, from their characters, which we know, will have the strongest desire to realise this Utopia. The peril is very great, very threatening; but how to avert it? What are we to do?"

"What, sir? You have to act upon ignorant, heroic, and exalted natures like Djalma; on sensitive and eccentric minds, like Adrienne de Cardoville; simple and ingenuous minds like Rose and Blanche Simon; upright and frank ones like François Hardy; angelic and pure like Gabriel; brutalised and sensual like Couche-tout-Nud; and yet you ask, 'What are we to do?'"

"I really do not understand you," said the Père d'Aigrigny.

"Of course you do not; that is very evident from your past conduct," replied Rodin, contemptuously. "You have had recourse to coarse and substantial means, instead of acting upon so many noble, generous, elevated passions, which, one day combined, will found a formidable union; but which, now divided and isolated, will be swayed by every surprise, every seduction, every inducement, every attack! Do you understand now? No! What, not yet?" and Rodin shrugged his shoulders. "Well, then, do people die of despair?"

"Yes!"

"The gratitude of happy love will, perhaps, go to the last limits of most absurd generosity?"

"Yes!"

"Are there not deceptions so horrid that suicide is the only refuge against such fearful realities?"

"Yes!"

"May not the excess of sensuality conduct us to the grave in slow and voluptuous agony?"

"Yes!"

"Are there not in life circumstances so terrible that the most worldly, firm, or impious characters will blindly throw themselves, broken and exhausted, into the arms of religion, and abandon the greatest possessions of this world for haircloth shirt, the prayer, and the holy rapture?"

"Yes!"

"Are there not, in fine, a thousand circumstances in which the reaction of the passions leads to the most extraordinary transformations, the most tragical terminations in the existence of man or woman?"

"Doubtless!"

"Why, then, inquire what we are to do? What would you say, if, for instance, the most dangerous members of this Rennepont family were to come, before three months, and on their knees implore, as a favour, to enter into this company, of which they now have a horror, and from which Gabriel has to-day severed?"

"Such a conversion is impossible!" exclaimed the P. d'Aigrigny.

"Impossible! And what were you, then, fifteen years ago, sir?" said Rodin; "a worldly-minded, impious debauchee! And yet you came to us, and your property became ours. What! We have subdued princes, kings, and popes; we have absorbed, extinguished in our unity the most exalted understandings; we have controlled almost the two worlds; we have perpetuated

ourselves vigorous, rich, and redoubtable, to this day, in spite of all hatreds and proscriptions; and shall we not get the better of one family which threatens us so vitally, and whose property, filched from our company, has become to us of paramount necessity? What! Shall we not be skilful enough to obtain this result, without clumsy violence and crimes that compromise? Are you, then, so ignorant of the immense resources of annihilation, mutual and partial, which are offered by the play of the human passions skilfully combined, opposed, crossed, loosened, and overexcited? And then, when, perhaps, thanks to an all-potent auxiliary," added Rodin, with a strange smile, "these passions may double their ardour and violence —"

"What auxiliary?" asked Père d'Aigrigny, who, as well as the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, experienced a sort of admiration, mingled with affright.

"Yes," continued Rodin, without replying to the R. P., "for this dread auxiliary, if it come to our aid, may bring with it overwhelming transformations, render cowardly the most daring, credulous the most impious, and fierce the most gentle!"

"But who is this auxiliary?" exclaimed the princess, oppressed with vague alarm; "this auxiliary, so powerful, so dread, what is it?"

"If it do arrive," resumed Rodin, as pale and impassive as ever, "the youngest, the most vigorous, will be at each moment in danger of death as imminent as the dying man at his last moment."

"But this auxiliary?" exclaimed the Père d'Aigrigny, more and more alarmed; for the more Rodin darkened the gloomy picture, the more cadaverous did his countenance become.

"In fact, this auxiliary may easily decimate the population, enclose in the shroud which it drags at its heels a whole accursed family; but it will be forced to respect the life of a great immutable body, which is

never weakened by the death of its members, because its mind — the mind of the Society of Jesus — is imperishable!"

"But — but this auxiliary?"

"Well, this auxiliary," continued Rodin, "this auxiliary, which advances, advances by slow paces, and whose terrible advent is announced by fearful and widely spread presentiments —"

"It is —?"

"The cholera!"

At this word, pronounced by Rodin in a harsh and piercing tone, the princess and Père d'Aigrigny turned pale and shuddered.

Rodin's look was gloomy and chilly, his appearance was corpselike.

For some seconds the silence of the grave reigned in the salon. Rodin first broke it. Still impassive, he pointed with an imperious gesture to Père d'Aigrigny, and then to the table, at which some minutes before he, Rodin, was humbly sitting, and said, in a harsh voice:

"Write!"

The R. P. at first started with surprise, then remembering that from superior he had sunk to subaltern, he arose, bowed to Rodin, passed in front of him, seated himself at the table indicated, took up his pen, and turning to Rodin, said:

"I am ready."

Rodin dictated, and the *père* wrote as follows:

"Through the mismanagement of the R. Père d'Aigrigny, the affair of the Rennepont inheritance has been to-day seriously compromised. The amount of the inheritance is two hundred and twelve millions. In spite of this check, we are of opinion that we can still formally undertake to prevent the Rennepont family from doing any injury to the company, and obtain for the said company the restitution of the two hundred and twelve

millions, which legitimately belong to it, — only, we must have the most entire and full powers to act."

A quarter of an hour after this scene Rodin left the Hôtel de Saint-Dizier, brushing his old greasy hat against his sleeve, and taking it off to acknowledge, by a very low bow, the bow of the porter.

Part VII.
THE PROTECTOR

CHAPTER XXV.

THE UNKNOWN.

THE following scene occurred the day after that on which the Père d'Aigrigny had been so rudely thrust from his preëminence by Rodin into that subaltern post which the *socius* had previously filled.

The Rue Clovis is in one of the most lone parts of the quarter of la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève; and, at the time of this recital, the house numbered 4 in the street consisted of a principal *corps de logis*, traversed by a dark alley, which led to a small, dark court, at the bottom of which was a second building, in a most dilapidated condition.

The ground floor of the façade was converted into a shop, half under ground, where were sold coals, wood in bundles, some vegetables, and milk.

Nine o'clock had struck, and the shopkeeper, named Mother Arsène, an old woman with a gentle but sickly complexion, wearing a gown of brown dimity, and a red cotton handkerchief around her head, was standing on the bottom step of the flight which led to her cave, and was finishing the display of her stock, — that is, on one side of her door she stationed a tin milk-pail, and on the other some bundles of withered vegetables, and particularly cabbages, with faded yellow heads. At the bottom of the staircase, in the shadow of the cellar, might be seen the glare of the burning embers of her little stove.

The shop, which was close to the alley, served for a porter's lodge, and the fruit-woman was the portress.

At this moment a charming little creature came out of the house, and entered, light and gaily, into Mother Arsène's.

It was the young girl called Rose-Pompon, the intimate friend of the Queen-Bacchanal. Rose-Pompon, who was temporarily a widow, and whose bacchic but respectful cicisbeo was, as we are aware, Nini-Moulin, that orthodox out-and-outer (*chicard*), who, when need was, transformed himself after his revels into Jacques Dumoulin the religious writer; passing thus easily from a wanton dance to ultramontane polemics, from the "full-blown tulip" to a Catholic pamphlet.

Rose-Pompon had just left her bed, as appeared by the negligee of her early and whimsical toilet. For want, no doubt, of some other head-dress, she had placed jauntily on her lovely light brown hair, so silky and carefully adjusted, a *bonnet de police*, borrowed from her gay costume of *débardeur*. Nothing could be more attractive than her countenance at seventeen years of age, rosy, fresh, dimpled, and brilliantly lighted up by two animated and sparkling blue eyes. Rose-Pompon was wrapped so closely from her throat to her feet in a Scotch mantle, with its red and green checks somewhat faded, that it showed an innate modesty; whilst her bare feet, so white that it was scarcely possible to tell if she had on stockings or not, were encased in small red morocco slippers, with silver buckles. It was easy to perceive that she had something in her hand, which her cloak concealed.

"Good day, Mlle. Rose-Pompon," said Mother Arsène, with a kind air; "you are early to-day, — didn't you dance last night?"

"Oh, do not talk to me about it, Mother Arsène; I had no heart for dancing, for poor dear Céphyse (the Queen-Bacchanal, sister of Mayeux) was weeping all

night, and would not be consoled, because her lover is in prison!"

"By the way," said the fruit-woman, — "by the way, mademoiselle, I must tell you something that concerns your friend Céphyse. I hope it will not offend you?"

"Offend me! Am I now offended?" said Rose-Pompon, shrugging her shoulders.

"Don't you think that when M. Philemon returns he will scold me?"

"Scold you! Why?"

"Because of his lodging, which you occupy."

"Why, now, Mother Arsène, did not Philemon, on the contrary, tell you that I was mistress of his two rooms in his absence as I was of himself?"

"It is not for you that I speak, mademoiselle, but your friend, Céphyse, whom you have also brought here to the lodging of M. Philemon."

"And where would she have gone but for me, my good Mother Arsène? After her lover had been arrested she did not dare return to her own rooms, because they owed all sorts of rent. So, seeing her trouble, I said to her, 'Come and lodge at Philemon's; when he comes back we will find some other place for you.'"

"Indeed, mademoiselle, if you are sure that M. Philemon will not be angry, why, it is all the same thing to me."

"Angry at what? Because we break his crockery? His crockery is so choice! Yesterday I broke the last cup, and only see what an odd thing I am compelled to make use of to come and fetch the milk in!"

And Rose-Pompon, laughing very heartily, thrust her pretty white arm forth from her cloak, and displayed to Mother Arsène one of those champagne glasses of colossal make which hold nearly a bottle.

"Ah," said the astonished fruit-woman; "why, it looks like a crystal trumpet!"

"It is Philemon's state glass, with which he was

presented when they made him a *canotier-flambard* (a species of aquatic odd-fellow, *à la Française*)."

"Really," said Mother Arsène, "I am quite ashamed that you should have to put your milk in such a thing."

"So am I; for if I should meet any one on the staircase, holding this glass in my hand like a wax candle, I should so laugh that I should break Philemon's last relic of domestic elegance, and then he would overwhelm me with his malediction."

"There is no fear of your meeting any one; the lodger on the first floor is gone out, and the second is a very late riser."

"Talking of lodgers," said Rose-Pompon, "haven't you a chamber to let on the second floor, at the bottom of the court? I was thinking of it for poor Céphyse when Philemon comes back."

"Yes, there is a miserable little closet under the tiles, over the two rooms tenanted by the old gentleman who is so very mysterious," said Mother Arsène.

"Yes, le Père Charlemagne. Don't you know anything more about him?"

"No, mademoiselle; only that he came here this morning at a very early hour, — daybreak, and put back the outside shutters. 'Have you received a letter from any one, dear madame?' he said; he is always so very polite, the worthy gentleman. 'No, sir,' I replied. 'Well, well, then, don't disturb yourself, my dear madame; I shall call again.' And away he went."

"Doesn't he ever sleep in the house?"

"Never. Probably he lodges somewhere else, for he only comes here for a few hours in the day about every four or five days."

"And does he come alone?"

"Always alone."

"Are you sure he never brings in any young puss of a niece or cousin with him? for if so, Philemon would

quit the lodgings," said Rose-Pompon, with an air of decorum that was very amusing.

"M. Charlemagne! A woman in his rooms! Ah, the poor man!" said the fruitress, lifting her hands to heaven; "if you did but see him with his greasy hat, his threadbare coat, his patched umbrella, and his stupid look, — why, he looks more like a saint than anything else!"

"Then, Mother Arsène, what can he come here for, alone for hours in that doghole at the bottom of the court, where one can hardly see clear at noonday?"

"That is what I want to know, mademoiselle. What can he do? It cannot be to amuse himself with his furniture, for all there is consists of a truckle-bed, a stove, a chair, and an old trunk."

"It is almost as brilliant a fit-out as Philemon's," said Rose-Pompon.

"Well, in spite of that, mademoiselle, he has as much fear of any one going in as if they were thieves and his furniture were made of massive gold. He has put on the door a safety-lock at his own expense, and never leaves the key with me; and then he always lights the fire in his stove himself, because he will not allow any person to enter his rooms."

"He is old, you say?"

"Yes, mademoiselle; between fifty and sixty."

"And ugly?"

"Only fancy two small, snaky-looking eyes, as if bored with a gimlet, in a face as pale as a corpse, — so pale, indeed, that his lips are white, — that is his face. As to his behaviour, the worthy old gentleman is so polite, and so often takes his hat off to make a low bow, that it is quite embarrassing."

"Still I must always ask," said Rose-Pompon, "what can he want all alone in two rooms? Well, if Céphyse takes the cabinet over him when Philemon comes back, we may have some amusement in finding out. How much do you ask for this cabinet?"

"Really, mademoiselle, it is in such a miserable condition that the proprietor will let it, I dare say, for from fifty to fifty-five francs a year; for there is hardly space to put a stove in, and it is only lighted by a fanlight as large as a snuff-box."

"Poor Céphyse!" said Rose-Pompon, with a sigh, and shaking her head sorrowfully. "After having had so much pleasure, after having spent so much money with Jacques Rennepont, to live there, and be compelled to return to living by her needle! She must have courage, indeed, to do that!"

"Why, to speak the truth, it is a wide distance from that cabinet to the carriage and four horses in which Mlle. Céphyse came to fetch you the other day, with all those merry maskers who were so gay, particularly the stout man in the silver-papered helmet, with the long feather and the top-boots; what a droll fellow he was!"

"Yes, Nini-Moulin, who has not his equal for dancing the 'forbidden fruit.' You should just see him vis-à-vis with Céphyse, the Queen-Bacchanal. Poor laughing girl! Poor riotous little dear! If she makes any disturbance now, it is in weeping."

"Ah, the follies of youth — the follies of youth!" said the fruitress.

"But, Mother Arsène, you were once young yourself, you know."

"*Ma foi!* It is as much as I was, if I tell the truth. I have always been pretty much as you see me now."

"And your lovers, Mother Arsène?"

"My lovers! Ah, yes! Well, in the first place, I was ugly; and, then, I was too well taken care of."

"Your mother, then, kept a sharp lookout after you?"

"No, mademoiselle; but I was harnessed —"

"Harnessed! What do you mean?" said Rose-Pompon, quite astonished, and interrupting the fruit-woman.

"Yes, mademoiselle, harnessed to a water-cart with

my brother. And so, you see, when we had tugged like two real horses for eight or ten hours a day, I had not the heart to think of fun and frolic."

"Poor Mother Arsène! What a horrid trade!" said Rose-Pompon, with interest.

"In winter, particularly in the frosty weather, it was the hardest. I and my brother were obliged to wear shoes with long, rough nails, because it was so slippery."

"And to put a woman to such work! It makes my heart ache. And yet they are forbidden to harness dogs!"[1] added Rose-Pompon, very sensibly.

"Indeed it is true," resumed Mother Arsène; "animals are sometimes more fortunate than human beings; but you see one must live. When the beast is tethered it must graze, but yet it was hard work. I got a complaint in my lungs by it, — that was no fault of mine. The sort of collar with which I was harnessed when I pulled, pressed very hard on my chest; sometimes I could not breathe for it; so I left my harness and took a shop. Still I will say that, if I had had opportunity and kind usage, I might, perhaps, have been like a great many other young creatures, who begin by laughing, and end — "

"By the reverse! True, Mother Arsène; but all the world has not courage enough to take to harness in order to live prudently. Besides, one always finds an excuse, and says we should amuse ourselves when we are young and agreeable; besides, one is not always only seventeen. Well, well, and then by and by comes either the end of the world, or, perhaps, one marries."

"Why, now, mademoiselle, I should say the better way was to begin by that."

"Yes, but one is too ignorant, — one does not know how to wheedle the men, or terrify them; as long as you are simple and credulous they laugh at you. Why,

[1] There are in France very tender laws in favour of the canine race, whom it is forbidden to harness in any way.

Mother Arsène, I could tell you what would startle all nature to hear, if I liked; but it is enough to have had one's troubles, without thinking of amusing oneself by recalling the remembrances of them."

"What, mademoiselle! Have you, so young and gay, had your troubles?"

"I have indeed, Mother Arsène; and at fifteen and a half I began to shed tears, which were not dried up at sixteen. That is trial enough, I hope."

"Were you deceived, mademoiselle?"

"Worse, as has been done to so many other poor girls, who, no more than myself, have desired to do wrong. My story is not a long one. My father and mother were country people near St. Valery, but poor, — so poor that, out of five children which they had, they were obliged to send me, at eight years of age, to my aunt, who was a *femme de ménage* here in Paris. The good soul took me out of charity, and that was doing a great deal for her, for her earnings were very small. When I was eleven she sent me to work in one of the manufactories of the Faubourg St. Antoine. I do not wish to say any ill of the masters of these factories, but it is all the same to them if little boys and little girls are huddled together with young women and young men from eighteen to twenty years of age, who are also huddled together. So you may suppose that there are there, as there are everywhere, badly disposed persons, and they are not particular either in words or in actions; and, I ask you, what example is this for children who see and understand more than they pretend to do? So you see as one grows up one becomes accustomed to hear and see things every day, which at last do not shock you at all."

"That is too true, as you say, Mlle. Rose-Pompon. Poor dears! There's no one to take care of them, — no father, no mother, — they are at their work —"

"Yes, yes, Mother Arsène, and they soon begin to

say of a young girl she is a this or she is a that; but if people only knew the reason of such things, perhaps they would more frequently pity instead of blame. Well, to return to myself, I really was at fifteen a very nice little girl. One day I had a complaint to make to the first clerk in the factory; so I went to his room, and he told me that he would set the matter right, and would even protect me, if I would listen to him; then he tried to kiss me, and I struggled with him; then he said, 'You refuse me? Well, then, you sha'n't work here any longer; I dismiss you from the factory!'"

"The wicked fellow!" said Mother Arsène.

"I returned home in tears, and poor aunt encouraged me not to give way, but to get a situation elsewhere. I tried, but it was impossible. The factories were crammed with work-people. A misfortune never comes alone, — my aunt fell ill, and we had not a sou in the house. I took courage and returned to the factory, and again entreated the clerk, but in vain. 'So much the worse for you,' said he, 'to reject the good offer I made you; for if you had behaved properly, why, by and by, very probably, I would have married you.' But I need not go on, Mother Arsène, — misery was on the one hand, I had no work, my aunt was sick, the clerk said perhaps he would marry me, — I did as others have done before me."

"And afterwards, when you asked him to marry you?"

"He laughed in my face, and at the end of six months left me. Then I wept all the tears in my body, so that none were left. I was ill with it, — but at last, like every one else, everybody became consoled and I became consoled. At last I met with Philemon, and on him I have revenged myself with others. I am his tyrant!" added Rose-Pompon, with a tragic air. And as she said so, the cloud of sadness which had overshadowed her pretty

face as she told her history to Mother Arsène passed away.

"It is evidently true!" said Mother Arsène, reflecting for a short time; "here is a poor girl been deceived by some one, without having any person to protect or defend her. Ah, how often it happens that we are not to blame for the wicked acts we may commit, for —"

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Rose-Pompon, interrupting the fruit-woman, and gazing eagerly on the other side of the street, "if there is not Nini-Moulin! Isn't he early? I wonder what he can possibly want with me." And, with these words, Rose-Pompon drew her mantle still more closely and carefully around her.

Jacques Dumoulin advanced, his hat stuck on one side, his nose more rubicund, and his eye twinkling more brightly than usual. He wore a loose paletot, which accurately defined the large proportions of his portly figure; while his two hands, one of which carried a thick stick placed gun fashion against his shoulder, were thrust into the vast pockets of his garment. At the moment of his approaching the portress, evidently with the design of asking her some question, he perceived Rose-Pompon.

"Holla!" cried he, "my ward up already? — that is all right! And behold me come to give you my blessing at the earliest blush of dawn."

So saying, suiting the action to the word, Nini-Moulin extended his arms, and advanced towards Rose-Pompon, who drew back from his proffered benedictions.

"How, my ungrateful child!" exclaimed the religious writer; "do you refuse my paternal embrace and morning blessing?"

"Thank you, I never accept paternal embraces from any one but Philemon. He wrote to me yesterday, and sent me a small box of raisins, two geese, a bottle of ratafia, and an eel, — rather a droll present, was it not? Well, I kept the ratafia, and changed all the rest away for two such loves of pigeons, whom I have put into

Philemon's chamber, which will make a very pretty little dovecot. And, better still, my dear husband is coming back to me with seven hundred francs, given to him by his highly respectable family, for the purpose of learning the bass-viol, the cornet-à-piston, and the speaking-trumpet, in order to make him irresistible in society, and so enable him to find a wife with 'plenty of tin,' as you call it, my early friend."

"Then I'll tell you what we will do, my pet child. We will just employ the ratafia with our breakfast, for the purpose of wishing all health and happiness to Philemon and his respectable relations, and drinking to his speedy arrival, in company with his seven hundred francs."

As he spoke, Nini-Moulin slapped the pockets of his waistcoat, which straightforth returned a jingling metallic sound, then added:

"I came to invite you to gild and embellish my life to-day, the next, and the day after — that is, if your heart —"

"Oh, if you are only proposing a sort of decent and fatherly visit, my heart will give me leave to accept your offer."

"Nothing can be more correct than my intentions. I will be your father, grandfather, great-grandfather, — nay, a living portrait of every male relation you have ever had. Let us see! There will be a promenade, dinner, the theatre, fancy ball, and supper afterwards; will that suit you?"

"Yes, upon condition that poor Céphyse goes with us. It will serve to divert her, poor thing!"

"With all my heart! Let Céphyse go."

"Why, what has happened to you, my fat friend? What piece of good luck befallen you? Has anybody left you a fortune?"

"Better than that, rosiest of damask roses! I am appointed principal editor to a religious journal! Now,

as my recent appointment will require me to become very sober and staid while in the precincts of the saintly concern, I have stipulated for a month's salary to be always paid in advance, with three days' free liberty to spend it in. On these conditions I have agreed to be a holy man for twenty-seven days out of the thirty, and to be as grave and stupid as the journal itself."

"You a journal — I mean the conductor of one? What a droll one it must be, when its editor is seen dancing all manner of forbidden steps upon the tables of the various cafés."

"Yes, it may seem a funny idea to you; but it will not appear any way droll to others I could mention. They are all the most pious saints who pay the piper. They do not consider the money, provided the journal is biting, tearing, burning, bruising, exterminating, assassinating. On my word, I have never been more violent and savage," added Nini, with a loud laugh. "I shall water the freshest gashes with my venom of the first growth, or with my gall of the most spar-r-r-r-r-r-kling effervescence!" And Nini-Moulin imitated the noise of a bottle of champagne when the cork bursts out, and Rose-Pompon laughed loudly.

"And what do you call your pious journal?" she asked.

"It is called 'The Love of One's Neighbour.'"

"A very right name."

"But it has another."

"Let's hear it."

"'The Love of One's Neighbour; or, the Exterminator of the Incredulous, the Indifferent, the Lukewarm, and others,' with this motto, 'Those who are not with us are against us.'"

"That is what Philemon says in his fights in the public-houses, when he lays about him."

"A proof the genius of the Eagle of Meaux is universal. I only reproach him with one thing, and that is his jealousy of Molière."

"'I THINK FROM ITALY.'"

"Bah! An actor's jealousy!" said Rose-Pompon.

"Wicked puss!" said Nini-Moulin, shaking his finger at her threateningly.

"Oh, is that the way you mean to exterminate Madame de Sainte-Colombe? She is rather lukewarm, eh? When's the wedding to be?"

"On the contrary, my journal is useful with her. Only think, chief editor! It is a superb position. The saints patronise me, thrust me forward, support me, bless me. I mean to lay hands on the Sainte-Colombe, and then a life — a life to death itself!"

At this moment a postman entered the shop, and handed a letter to the greengrocer, saying, "For M. Charlemagne. Paid."

"What!" said Rose-Pompon, "is it for the little mysterious old fellow with his odd ways? Does it come from a long way off?"

"I think from Italy — Rome," said Nini-Moulin, looking at the letter as the fruit-woman held it in her hand. "Who," said he, "is this wonderful little old man?"

"Only imagine, my bulky friend," said Rose-Pompon, "an old worthy, who has two rooms at the bottom of the courtyard. He never sleeps there, but comes to shut himself from time to time for hours, without allowing any person to go a-nigh him; and no one can make out what he does."

"He is a conspirator or a coiner," said Nini-Moulin, laughing.

"Poor, dear man!" said Mother Arsène; "where is his false money, then? He always pays me in honest sous for the morsel of bread and black radish which I give him for breakfast, whenever he does breakfast."

"And what is the name of this mysterious elderly?" asked Nini-Moulin.

"M. Charlemagne," said the fruit-woman. "But see, talk of the devil and you see his horns!"

"Where are his horns?"

"Look! The little old man down there — coming by that house. He walks with his neck bent, and his umbrella under his arm."

"M. Rodin!" exclaimed Nini-Moulin; and, receding quickly, he descended three steps down the ladder, that he might not be seen. Then he added, "And you say he is called —"

"M. Charlemagne. Do you know him?" inquired the greengrocer.

"What the devil can he be after here with a false name?" said Jacques Dumoulin, speaking to himself in a low voice.

"What, do you know him?" asked Rose-Pompon, in a tone of impatience. "You seem dumbfounded!"

"And this gentleman has here two rooms, and makes mysterious visits?" said Jacques Dumoulin, more and more surprised.

"Yes!" replied Rose-Pompon. "You may see his windows from Philemon's dovecot."

"Quick, quick! Let us get down the alley that he may not meet me," said Dumoulin. And, without having been seen by Rodin, he glided from the shop into the alley, and from the alley went up the staircase which led to the apartment occupied by Rose-Pompon.

"Good day, M. Charlemagne!" said Mother Arsène to Rodin, who came to the threshold of her door. "To see you twice in one day is a pleasure, indeed; for you are so seldom here —"

"You are too kind, my dear madame," said Rodin, with a courteous salute.

And then he entered the fruit-woman's shop.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RETREAT.

RODIN'S countenance, when he entered Mother Arsène's, breathed the most perfect simplicity; and, leaning his two hands on the handle of his umbrella, he said:

"I am very sorry, my dear madame, to have awakened you so early this morning."

"Worthy sir, you come so seldom that I cannot have anything to reproach you with."

"Why, my excellent madame, I live in the country, and can only come from time to time to my apartments here to attend to my little affairs."

"By the way, sir, the letter which you expected yesterday came this morning; it is a thick packet, and comes from a considerable distance. Here it is," said the fruit-woman, drawing the letter from her pocket; "there was no postage to pay."

"Thank you, my dear madame," said Rodin, taking the letter with assumed indifference, and putting it in the side pocket of his greatcoat, which he buttoned up carefully.

"Are you going up-stairs, sir?"

"Yes, my dear lady."

"Then I will arrange your little provision," said Mother Arsène. "I suppose, worthy sir, it is to be as usual?"

"Yes, precisely so."

"I will have it all ready in a twinkling."

So saying, the greengrocer took an old basket, and having placed on it three or four turfs for burning, a little bundle of split wood, and some pieces of charcoal, she covered these combustibles with a cabbage leaf; then, going to the innermost recess of her shop, she took from a bin a large, round loaf, from which she cut a slice. After which she picked out, with the eye of a connoisseur, a magnificent black radish [1] from a bundle of these roots, cut it in two, and, making a hole in it, filled it with common coarse salt; put the two pieces together again, and placed them carefully beside the bread on the cabbage leaf, which separated the fuel from the eatables. Then, taking from her stove some lighted charcoal, she put it in a wooden shoe filled with cinders, which she also placed in the basket. Going then to the last step of the staircase, Mother Arsène said to Rodin:

"Here is your basket, sir."

"A thousand thanks, dear madame," replied Rodin; and thrusting his hand into his trousers pocket, he took out eight sous, which he handed one by one to the fruit-woman, and said, as he took the basket from her, "By and by, when I come down again, I will return your basket as usual."

"Quite at your service, kind sir, — quite at your service," said Mother Arsène.

Rodin put his umbrella under his left arm, took in his right hand the fruitress's basket, went into the dark alley, crossed a small court, and, with an active step, went up to the second story of a *corps de logis*, very much out of repair. When he had arrived there, taking a key out of his pocket, he opened an outer door, which he shut very carefully after him.

The first room of the two he occupied was completely unfurnished; and as to the second, it is impossible to imagine any retreat more squalid and poverty-struck.

[1] This species of radish, which is of the size of a table turnip, but longer, is little known out of France, where it is popular with the poorer classes.

A paper so rubbed, old, and torn, that its original shade was not to be traced, covered the walls; a rickety truckle-bed, covered with a mean and mildewed counterpane, and a wretched mattress; a stool; a small table of worm-eaten wood; a stove of grayish earthenware, as crackled as the porcelain of Japan; an old trunk with a padlock, placed under the bed, — such was the furniture of this dilapidated doghole.

A narrow window, with dirty panes of glass, scarcely lighted this room, almost entirely deprived of air and light by the height of the building which looked on the street. Two old pocket-handkerchiefs, fastened together by pins, and which were movable at will by rings, which traversed a piece of packthread stretched from side to side of the window, served for curtains. The loose and broken planks, which showed the plastering of the flooring, proved the utter carelessness of the lodger in this abode.

After having closed the door, Rodin threw his hat and umbrella on the truckle-bed, placed the basket on the floor, and taking out the bread and black radish, deposited them on the plate. Then, kneeling before his stove, he piled up his combustibles therein, and lighted them, by blowing on the hot charcoal he had brought in the wooden shoe with a strong and powerful lung.

When, as the phrase goes, the stove began to draw, Rodin went and spread his two handkerchiefs, which were his curtains, on the packthread; and then, believing himself quite concealed from all eyes, he took from his pocket the letter which Mother Arsène had handed to him. As he did so, he drew out several papers and other things; one of these papers, soiled and rumpled, and folded into a small parcel, fell on the table and opened. It contained a cross of the Legion of Honour, in silver, which time had blackened, and the red riband of the cross had almost lost its primitive colour.

At the sight of this cross, which he put in his pocket,

together with the medal which Faringhea had stolen from Djalma, Rodin shrugged his shoulders and gave a contemptuous and sardonic smile. He then pulled out his large silver watch, and placed it on the table beside the letter from Rome.

He contemplated the letter with a singular mixture of mistrust and hope, fear and impatient curiosity. After a moment's reflection he was about to unseal the envelope, but threw it down suddenly on the table, as if, by a strange caprice, he desired to prolong for some moments the emotions of uncertainty as strong, as painful, and as exciting as the agonies of gaming.

Looking at his watch, Rodin resolved not to open the letter until the hand should mark half past nine, of which it wanted seven minutes.

By one of those childish and odd beliefs in fatality, from which the greatest minds are not exempt, Rodin said to himself, "I am burning with desire to open this letter. If I do not open it until half past nine o'clock, the news it conveys will be favourable!"

To employ these minutes, Rodin walked a few paces in his chamber, and then placed himself in admiring contemplation before two old yellow engravings, eaten up by age, and fastened to the wall by two rusty nails.

The first of these objects of art, the only ornaments with which Rodin had ever decorated this wretched place, was one of those coarsely designed pictures, coloured in red, yellow, green, and blue, which are sold at fairs. An Italian inscription announced that this engraving had been done at Rome.

It represented a woman covered with rags, carrying a wallet, and having on her knees a little child. A hideous fortune-teller was holding in her swarthy hands the hand of the little infant, and appeared to be divining its future fate, for these words were coming out of her mouth in large, blue letters: "*Sarà Papa*" (He will be Pope).

The second of these objects of art, which seemed to inspire Rodin with profound meditation, was an excellent copperplate line-engraving, of which the careful finish, the drawing at once bold and accurate, contrasted strangely with the coarse daubing of the other print.

This rare and magnificent engraving, for which Rodin had paid six louis (an enormous luxury), represented a youth clothed in tatters. The ugliness of his features was compensated by the intelligent expression of his strongly marked physiognomy. Seated on a stone, surrounded by a herd of swine which he was keeping, his pale face was seen as he leant on his elbow, and rested his chin in the palm of his hand.

The pensive and reflective posture of the young man, clothed like a mendicant, the power of his expansive forehead, the finesse of his penetrating look, the firmness of his clever mouth, seemed to announce an unconquerable resolution, united with a superior understanding and the most skilful address.

Over this figure the pontifical attributes encircled a medallion, in the centre of which was seen the head of an old man; the lines of his face, strongly marked and deeply incised, recalled in a striking manner, and in spite of their senility, the features of the young keeper of the herd.

This engraving had for its title, "The Youth of Sixtus Quintus;" and the painted picture, "The Prediction." [1]

Looking at these engravings nearer and nearer, with an eye that grew more and more ardent and inquiring, as if it had asked for inspiration or hope from the pictures, Rodin had gone so close that, standing up as he did, and with his right hand behind his head, he was literally leaning with his elbow against the wall, whilst, thrusting his left hand into the pocket of his black

[1] According to the tradition, it was predicted to the mother of Sixtus Quintus that he should be pope, and that he would, in his early youth, be a keeper of flocks and herds.

trousers, he thus threw aside one of the skirts of his old olive greatcoat. For several minutes he maintained this meditative attitude.

Rodin, as we have said, came seldom to this retreat. By the rules of his Order, he had up to this time lived with Père d'Aigrigny, whose surveillance was specially confided to him. No member of the congregation, especially in the subaltern position which Rodin had filled up to that time, was allowed to shut himself up at his own home, nor even possess a piece of furniture shutting with a key, so that nothing interfered with the exercise of a mutual and incessant espionage, one of the most powerful modes of action and servitude which was employed by the Company of Jesus.

In consequence of various combinations, which were personally important to him as well as others, which concerned the general interests of his Order, Rodin had taken the lodging in the Rue Clovis unknown to any one.

It was from the depth of this unknown retreat that the *socius* corresponded directly with the most eminent and influential personages of the Sacred College.

It may, perhaps, be recollected that at the beginning of this history, when Rodin wrote to Rome that the Père d'Aigrigny, having received the order to leave France without seeing his dying mother, had hesitated to set out, — it may be remembered, we say, that Rodin had added, in the shape of a postcript at the bottom of the note, which announced to the general of the Order the hesitation of the Père d'Aigrigny:[1]

"Assure the prince-cardinal he may fully rely on me, but that I expect, in his turn, he will serve me with equal zeal and activity."

This familiar way of corresponding with the most powerful dignitary of the Order, the almost protecting

[1] *Vide* Vol. I., p. 212.

tone of recommendation which Rodin addressed to a prince-cardinal, sufficiently proved that the *socius*, in spite of his apparent subalternship, was at this epoch considered as a man of great importance by many princes of the church and other dignitaries, who wrote to him in Paris under his assumed name, and in cipher too, with every precaution and careful arrangement.

After several moments of meditation before the portrait of Sixtus Quintus, Rodin came slowly towards the table where he had placed the letter, which, by a sort of superstitious delay, he had deferred opening, in spite of his eager curiosity.

As it still wanted a few minutes before the hand marked half past nine o'clock, Rodin, that no time might be lost, prepared his frugal breakfast very methodically. He placed on the table beside his inkstand, garnished with pens, the bread and black radish; then, sitting down on his stool, and having the stove, as it were, between his legs, he drew from his pocket a horn-handled knife, the sharp blade of which was three-quarters worn away; and alternately cutting a morsel of bread and a morsel of radish, he began his frugal repast with a keen appetite, fixing his eye on the hand of his watch.

When the fated moment arrived, Rodin broke open the envelope with a trembling hand. It contained two letters. The first seemed to give him but very indifferent satisfaction, for, after some moments, he shrugged his shoulders, rapped impatiently on the table with the handle of his knife, struck the letter disdainfully with the back of his dirty hand, and then perused the second missive, holding his bread in one hand, and with the other dipping his radish mechanically into the coarse salt spread on a corner of the table.

Suddenly he remained motionless. As he advanced in the perusal of his reading he seemed more and more interested, surprised, and struck.

Rising suddenly, he ran to the window, as if to assure himself by a second examination of the ciphers of the letter that he was not mistaken, so greatly had what he read taken him by surprise.

Rodin, no doubt, discovered that he had deciphered the letter precisely, for letting fall his arms, not with dismay, but with the surprise of a satisfaction as sudden as unexpected, he remained for some time with his head lowered, his look fixed and deep; the only mark of joy exhibited was by a sort of sonorous, rapid, and prolonged breathing.

Men as bold in their ambition as patient and determined in their subterranean sap, are astonished at the result, when that result incredibly exceeds and surpasses their sagacious and prudent forecast. Rodin was in this position — thanks to prodigies of cunning, address, and dissimulation; thanks to immense promises of corruption; thanks, indeed, to a singular admixture of admiration, alarm, and confidence, which his genius had inspired many influential persons with, Rodin learned from the pontifical government that, in a possible and probable result, he might, within a given time, pretend, with a chance of success, to a position which had, but too frequently, excited the fear, hatred, or envy of sovereigns, and which has been sometimes occupied by great and good men, by abominable wretches, or by persons sprung from the very dregs of society.

But, in order that Rodin might the more surely attain his aim, it was absolutely requisite for him to succeed in what he had engaged to undertake without violence, and solely by the play and action of the passions skilfully handled, — that is to say, to assure to the Company of Jesus the possession of the property of the Rennepont family, a possession which had in it a double and immense consequence; for Rodin, according to his personal views, thought to make of his Order (the chief of which was at his mercy) a footstool and a means of intimidation.

His first impression of surprise passed, — an impression which, be it said, was but a kind of modesty of ambition, a mistrust of self, very common with men of really superior minds, — Rodin contemplated more coolly and more logically the matter before him, and almost reproached himself for his surprise.

Yet, soon afterwards, by a whimsical contradiction, and again giving way to one of those puerile and absurd ideas before which man often bows, when he knows or thinks himself perfectly alone and hidden, Rodin rose suddenly, took the letter which had so agreeably astonished him, and actually opened it before the eyes of the picture of the young herdsman who became pope; and then shaking his head disdainfully and triumphantly, and darting at the portrait his reptile glance, he said between his teeth, whilst with his dirty finger he touched the pontifical emblems, "Well, brother, — and I, too, perchance!"

After this weak display Rodin resumed his seat; and, as if the good news he had received had sharpened his appetite, he placed the letter before him in order that he might read it again, and, fixing his eyes on it, he began to gnaw his hard bread and black radish with a kind of furious joy, whilst he hummed an old air of the Litanies.

There was something strange, grand, and even fearful, in the opposite qualities of this immense ambition, already almost justified by events, and bounded, if we may so say, in such a wretched shelter.

Père d'Aigrigny, a man, if not very superior, at least had a real value, was a man of high rank by birth, very proud, well placed in the great world, had never dared even to have had the thought of pretending to that to which Rodin pretended at one leap. The only view of Père d'Aigrigny — and he thought that insolent — was to be one day elected general of his Order, an order that embraced the whole world.

The difference of the ambitious daring in these two men is conceivable. When a man of first-rate mind, of a sound and active nature, concentrating all the force of his soul and body on one only thought, obstinately practises, as Rodin had done, chastity, frugality, and the voluntary renunciation of every indulgence of heart or senses, that man but seldom revolts against the sacred ordinances of his Creator but for the profit of some monster and absorbing passion, some infernal divinity, which, by an unholy compact, demands from him, in exchange for a redoubtable power, the annihilation of every noble inclination, every worthy attraction, every tender instinct, with which the Lord, in his eternal wisdom, in his inexhaustible munificence, has so paternally endowed his creature.

During the mute scene that we have just described, Rodin had not observed that the curtains of one of the windows situated on the third floor of the building which overlooked the *corps de logis* in which he was had been somewhat drawn aside, and half disclosed the sly features of Rose-Pompon and the solemn visage of Nini-Moulin.

Consequently Rodin, in spite of his rampart of pocket-handkerchiefs, had not kept out the anxious and curious scrutiny of the two Coryphees of the "Storm-blown tulip."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE UNEXPECTED VISIT.

Although Rodin had experienced the utmost surprise on the perusal of the second letter from Rome, he would not allow his astonishment to betray itself in his reply. His frugal breakfast ended, he took a sheet of paper and wrote rapidly, and in cipher, the following note, in that abrupt and concise style which was habitual to him, when he was not obliged to restrain himself:

"What you tell me does not surprise me — I had foreseen it all. Indecision and baseness always produce such results. It is not enough, — heretic Russia cuts the throat of Catholic Poland; Rome blesses the murderers and curses the victims.[1]

"I would have it so.

"In return, Russia guarantees to Rome, through Austria, the bloody repression of the patriots of Romagna.

"I would still have it so.

"The bands of cut-throats of the good Cardinal Albani are not sufficiently numerous for the massacre of the impious Liberals — they are weary.

[1] We read in the "Affairs of Rome," this admirable remark on Rome, from the pen of the most evangelical genius of our times:

"So long as the struggle between Poland and her oppressors remained doubtful, the official Roman journal did not contain a word which could offend the people, victorious in so many struggles. But no sooner had it been subdued, scarcely had the atrocious vengeance of the Czar began the lengthened punishment of the whole nation given over to the sword, to exile, and slavery, than the same journal could not find language insulting enough to heap on those whom Fortune had abandoned. We might, perhaps, be wrong to attribute this unworthy baseness to the direct interference of the pontifical government. It had laid down the law which Russia had enforced: it had said, wouldst thou live? keep thou there — close to the scaffold — and as they shall pass do thou curse the victims!" — Lamennais, *Affaires de Rome*, p. 110.

"That is not as I would have it.

"They must advance — —"

At the moment when Rodin wrote these last words his attention was suddenly attracted by the clear and sweet voice of Rose-Pompon, who, knowing Béranger's ballads by heart, had opened Philemon's window, and was seated on the bar in front, and sang, with much expression and neatness, this couplet of the immortal song-writer:

"'Tis sin to say that God, who did create
And doth support us all, is angry ever;
Bright wine, that with firm friendship well doth mate,
He gives — with love whose influence fadeth never.
Come, then, your aid, ye trio lend,
To scare away dull mood, —
And, glass in hand, let's all depend
On God who guards the good!"

This song, commenced in such a divine spirit, contrasted so strangely with the cold cruelty of the lines written by Rodin, that he shuddered and bit his lips with rage, when he heard this strain of the great and truly Christian poet, who had hit such hard blows at the evil church.

Rodin waited a few moments in fierce impatience, believing that the voice would continue; but Rose-Pompon was silent, or, at least, only hummed, and then passed into another air, that of the "Good Pope," which she sang without the words.

Rodin, not daring to look out and see who was this impertinent singer, shrugged his shoulders, resumed his pen, and continued:

"Another thing: it has become necessary to rouse up the independents in all countries, to excite the philosophising mania of Europe, to make Liberalism lash itself into a foam, to rouse against Rome all that is vociferous against her. To that end, proclaim in the face of the world the three following propositions:

"1st. It is abominable to maintain that we can acquire salvation in any profession of faith, if our lives are pure.

"2d. It is hateful and absurd to grant the people liberty of conscience.

"3d. There cannot be too much horror excited against the liberty of the press.[1]

"We must induce the weak man to declare these propositions strictly orthodox in every particular, — to boast their good effect on despotic governments, on true Catholics, on the muzzlers of the people. He will be taken in the snare. The propositions regularly enumerated, the tempest will burst forth, — a general rising against Rome; a wide-spreading schism; the Sacred College divided into three parties; one approving, the other blaming, and the third trembling. The weak man, still more alarmed than he is at this moment at allowing Poland to be massacred, will recoil before the clamours,

[1] We find the following passages in the "Encyclical Letter," addressed by the pope to all the bishops in France in 1832, desiring that they and their flocks should conform to these instructions, as that they were in direct opposition to the laws of the land and the rights of citizens.

Need we say that M. de Lamennais protested, with all the power of his genius and great heart, against such odious maxims as those which we subjoin in all their ultramontane candour?

"We now arrive," says the holy father, "at another cause, with which we groan to see the church at this time afflicted; that is, what indifferentism, or perverse opinion, which is spreading on all sides, through the wiles of the wicked, and according to which eternal salvation may be acquired by any profession of faith, provided the lives be right and honest. It will not be difficult for you, in a matter so clear and evident, to reject an error so fatal to the people confided to your care."

Is not this clear enough? Advice to us who are confided to the cares of pastors! This is not all. There is an Italian monk, the ultramontane chief of our bishops, who cancels, with a scratch of his pen, one of our most sacred rights, — a right which has cost the country torrents of blood, shed in religious wars.

"From this infected source of indifferentism," continues the holy father, "flows the absurd and erroneous maxim, or, rather, this insane idea, that we must assure and guarantee to each and all the liberty of conscience. We prepare the way for this pernicious error by the full and unlimited liberty of opinion, which spreads far and wide, to the misfortune of religious and civil society."

It is plain that the holy father orders his bishops to inspire their flocks with horror at one of the fundamental laws of society. Let us conclude our extracts by a sample of the said holy father, not less violent nor less conclusive against the dragon of the press:

"Then we have that dreadful liberty, which can never be held in too great horror, the liberty for a bookseller to publish any writings whatsoever; a liberty which some dare to request, and extend with as much publicity as ardour." — *Encyclical Letter of Pope Gregory X.* (the present pope) *to the Bishops of France.*

reproaches, threats, and violent ruptures he himself has created.

"That suits me admirably.

"Then for one good P. V. to shake the conscience of the weak man — to disturb his mind — to affright his soul! To sum up: overwhelm him with disgust — divide his councils — isolate him — alarm him — redouble the ferocious ardour of the good Albani — rouse the appetite of the Sanfédists[1] — hand over the Liberals to their tender appetites — pillage, violation, massacre, as at Cesèna — a real flowing tide of Carbonari blood! The weak man will have the after-gulp of it, — so many murders in his name! He will recoil — he will recoil! Each day will accumulate his remorse, each night his terror, each moment his anguish! And the abdication which he threatens at this moment will come at last, perchance too soon, — that is the only danger at present, and you must look to it!

"In case of abdication, I am down in the list of the *Grande Pénitencerie*. Instead of confiding to a general the control of our Order, the best militia of the holy seat, I myself shall contest it. Henceforth that militia will give me no uneasiness; for instance, the Janissaries and the Pretorean guards were always troublesome to authority — why? Because they were able to organise themselves as the defenders of a power beyond power itself; hence their means of intimidation.

"Clement XIV.? A fool. To destroy, abolish our

[1] Pope Gregory XVI. had scarcely mounted the pontifical throne when he learnt of the revolt of Bologna. His first movement was to appeal to the Austrians, and excite the Sanfédists. Cardinal Albani beat the Liberals at Cesèna, his troops pillaged the churches, sacked the city, violated the women. At Forli the bands committed assassinations with the utmost coolness. In 1832 the Sanfédists showed themselves in open day, with medals of the effigies of the Duke de Modena and the holy father, letters patent in the name of the apostolic congregation, privileges, and indulgences. The Sanfédists took literally the following oath: "I swear to elevate the throne and the altar on the bones of the infamous Liberals, and to exterminate them, without pity for the cries of children or the tears of old men and women." The disorders committed by these ruffians surpassed all bounds; the court of Rome regularised the anarchy, and organised the Sanfédists, or volunteer corps, to which they granted new privileges. — *La Révolution et les Révolutionnaires en Italie: Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15th November, 1844.

Order, was an absurd fault. Defend it — establish its innocence — declare himself its general — this is what he should have done. The Order, thenceforward at his mercy, would have consented to everything. He should have absorbed us — enfeoffed us to the holy chair — which had then no reason to fear our services! Clement XIV. died of the colic. *Verbum sap.!* If the case should so result, I shall not die that death."

Again Rose-Pompon's voice was heard clear and vibrating. Rodin jumped from his chair in anger, but as soon as he heard the following couplet, which he did not know (he had not his Béranger, as had Philemon's widow), the Jesuit, accessible to certain fancies whimsically superstitious, remained stupefied and almost frightened at the singular coincidence. It is the "Good Pope" of Béranger who says:

"And what are kings but fools at best,
Or robbers puffed with pride?
Who clothe their crimes in ermine vest,
And — die like all beside!
I can absolve them all for gold,
Or change their sceptre to a staff —
Brave boys, laugh —
Laugh and sing —
Dance and spring —
Whilst I dart the thunder bold!
Heaven's lightning's mine —
I am divine!"

Rodin half rose from his chair with outstretched neck, and his eye fixed, whilst Rose-Pompon, fluttering like a bee from flower to flower of her collection of songs, now began to sing the delightful song of "Colebri."

Hearing no more, the Jesuit resumed his seat in a sort of amazement, but, after a few moments' reflection, his face suddenly brightened — he perceived a happy presage in this singular incident.

He resumed his pen, and his first words smacked, as it were, of his strange trust in fatality:

"I was never more confident of success than at this moment, — another reason why nothing should be neglected. Every presentiment should have increase of zeal. Another thought has just occurred to me; we shall act here in concert. I have established an ultra-Catholic journal, 'The Love of One's Neighbour.' By its ultramontane, tyrannous, and anti-freedom fury, it will be believed to be the organ of Rome. I shall give all possible credibility to these reports. Fresh fuel for the flames.

"All this goes as I would have it.

"I shall open the question of the right of instruction, — the Liberals of the first class will support us. Asses that they are! They will admit to this common right, when our privileges, immunities, influence in confessional, our obedience to Rome, put us without the pale of the common right, through the very advantages that we enjoy. Double, triple asses! They think us disarmed because they are so themselves as against us.

"Burning questions, irritating disputes, — fresh disgust for the weak man! Every rivulet swells the torrent.

"That all works as I would have it.

"To sum up in two words, — the end is abdication! The means, eternal worry, incessant torture! The Rennepont inheritance will pay for the election, price fixed, goods sold!"

Rodin ceased suddenly to write, thinking he heard some noise at the door of the room which opened on the staircase; he listened, held his breath, all was still again, and, thinking he was mistaken, he resumed his pen:

"I take upon myself the Rennepont affair, that unique pivot of our temporal combinations. It must be renewed on a different system; we must now play on different interests, the springs of the passions, instead of the stupid, senseless blows of the club stricken by P. d'Aigrigny, who has nearly ruined the entire affair. Still

he has yet many useful points at command, — the world, powers of persuasion, a quick and penetrating glance; but then only one gamut, and not yet great enough to know how to make himself little. From his mediocrity I shall derive due advantages; there are bits of utility still left. I have used at the precise moment the power plenipotentiary of the R. P. G. I shall tell Père d'Aigrigny, if I see fit, the secret engagements between myself and the general. Up to this time I have let him work for this inheritance, whose destination you know; good ideas, but untimely,—the same end by another route.

"The information, wrong, — there are more than two hundred millions. The period having elapsed, what was in doubt is now certain, and we have a wide field before us.

"The Rennepont affair is at this moment mine in a twofold sense. Before three months have elapsed these two hundred millions shall be ours, by the free consent of the heirs; this must be. For if this fails, the temporal grasp escapes me; my chances are diminished by one-half. I have asked for full powers, — time presses, and I shall act as if I had them. Information is necessary for my plans, — I expect it from you. I must have it, you understand me? The high influence of your brother at the court of Vienna must serve you in this. I wish to have the most precise details as to the real position of the Duke de Reichstadt at this moment, the real Napoleon II. of the imperial party. Can we — yes or no — have, through your brother, a secret correspondence with the prince, unknown to those who are about him?

"Advise me on this speedily, for it is urgent. This note goes to-day, I shall complete it to-morrow. It will reach you as usual by the little shopkeeper."

At the moment when Rodin had placed this letter under a double cover and sealed it, he thought he again heard a noise outside the door.

He listened.

After a few moments' silence, several raps at his door were plainly heard in the room.

Rodin started; it was the first time that any person had ever knocked at the door during the time he had tenanted the rooms.

Putting hastily into his greatcoat pocket the letter he had just written, the Jesuit opened the old trunk lid under his truckle-bed, took thence a packet of papers wrapped in a ragged pocket-handkerchief, placed in the parcel the two letters in cipher which he had just received, and carefully locked the trunk.

The knocking continued outside with increased impatience.

Rodin took the greengrocer's basket in his hand, his umbrella under his arm, and, much disturbed, he went to see who this unpleasant visitor could be.

He opened the door, and found himself face to face with Rose-Pompon, the troublesome singer, who, making him a low and graceful curtsy, said, with an air of the greatest simplicity in the world:

"M. Rodin, if you please?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FRIENDLY SERVICE.

RODIN, however great his surprise and uneasiness at so unexpected a visitor, betrayed no outward mark of perturbation; on the contrary, he first carefully closed the door after him, and then, casting a scrutinising glance on the features of the very pretty creature who stood before him, he contented himself with inquiring, in a calm and encouraging tone:

"Whom did you wish to see, my good girl?"

"M. Rodin, sir, if you please!" answered Rose-Pompon, opening her large, saucy-looking blue eyes their utmost width, and looking full in the face of the person she addressed.

"Ah!" replied Rodin, preparing to descend the stairs, "no such person lives here — I don't know the name — you had better inquire higher up, or, perhaps, lower down — I really can't assist you."

"Well!" exclaimed Rose-Pompon, shrugging her shoulders, and bursting into a merry laugh; "that's what I call a very pretty joke for so staid and respectable an individual as you to try and play off upon a poor girl like me! Just as if every one didn't know well enough that your name is Rodin."

"I beg your pardon," said the *socius;* "Charlemagne is my name — Charlemagne, at your service! — if, indeed, there is anything I can do for you. But I am too old to expect that such a pretty girl can require the services of a person like me."

"Stuff and nonsense!" responded Rose-Pompon, in a tone of mingled irony and command. "Don't talk so to me! What! I suppose we have got our little private reasons for playing at hide and seek here, and changing our name to prevent the good woman at home from hearing of our naughty tricks? Oh, you are a sly old fellow, you are, but you see I've found you out!"

"Come, come, my good girl," said the *socius*, smiling a smile of paternal blandness, "you seem, at any rate, to know my character, if you are mistaken in my name. I am indeed an old man, with a young heart, and nothing delights me more than to witness the buoyant happiness of young people. Ah, I love the young! It rejoices me to see their light and joyous natures revelling in the delights of the present, without reflecting upon the dark hour which is to come. But let me pass, my dear! Amuse yourself as much as you like at my expense, but pray permit me to go down the stairs, for my time is very precious;" and again Rodin essayed to descend the staircase.

"Stay, M. Rodin!" cried Rose-Pompon, in deep and solemn voice. "I can't let you go yet. I have something very particular indeed to communicate to you, and after that I want to consult you upon a small love affair."

"Why, you little madcap, have you got nobody at home you can tease, that you are obliged to come and play your pranks off upon me?"

"Why, Lord bless you, M. Rodin," answered Rose-Pompon, purposely pronouncing the name with considerable emphasis, "this is my home — I live here!"

"You do? Only imagine my being ignorant of possessing so pretty a neighbour!"

"Well, I declare I wonder at that! Why, M. Rodin, I have been lodging here these six months."

"Have you really? Whereabouts?"

"On the third floor — just opposite your window, M. Rodin."

"And I suppose you are the charming songstress I heard warbling so divinely while I was taking my breakfast?"

"The very same, M. Rodin."

"Upon my word you afforded me a great treat."

"I'm sure it's very polite of you to say so, M. Rodin."

"And of course you are residing here in the bosom of your respectable family?"

"Of course I am, M. Rodin!" answered Rose-Pompon, casting down her eyes, and speaking in a tone of candid naïveté; "I live with my grandfather Philemon and my grandmother Bacchanal, who is just a queen, neither more nor less."

Rodin had been up to the present moment in a state of undefinable apprehension and alarm, from his ignorance of the manner in which Rose-Pompon had contrived to possess herself of his real name; but when he heard her allude to the Queen-Bacchanal, and still more learned that the person so designated inhabited the same house with himself, he found, in the pleasing prospect all this held out, a very agreeable recompense for all he had been made to suffer through the joke played off by his unknown tormentor, and the unexpected appearance of Rose-Pompon. It was, in fact, highly essential to the plans of Rodin to discover the abode of the Queen-Bacchanal, the mistress of Couche-tout-Nud, and the sister of La Mayeux; the latter having, since her conversation with the superior of the convent, and subsequent interview with Mlle. de Cardoville, been signalised as a dangerous and suspected person.

And more than this, Rodin, after what he had already learned, hoped, by a little skilful management, to draw from the unsuspicious Rose-Pompon the name of the person by whose direction she had sought to surprise his *incognito*, and from whom she had heard that M. Charlemagne and M. Rodin were one and the same individual.

Scarcely then had the young girl uttered the name of the Queen-Bacchanal than, with a sudden clasp of the hands, Rodin assumed an expression of mingled surprise and intense interest.

"My good girl," exclaimed he, "let me beg of you to leave off jesting, and tell me truly whether the person you style the Queen-Bacchanal is sister to a deformed young sempstress."

"Yes, to be sure I do," answered Rose-Pompon, on her side exhibiting the most unfeigned astonishment; "people call her so, but her real name is Céphyse Soliveau, and she is my own most particular friend."

"Ah," said Rodin, thoughtfully, "she is your friend, is she?"

"Yes, sir! I told you she was the friend I love best in the world."

"Oh, you love her extremely, do you?"

"That I do; quite as much as if she were my own sister. Poor girl! I do all I can for her, but that is not much. But how, in the name of wonder, comes a person of your age and appearance to know anything about the Queen-Bacchanal? Ha! now you see I was right! Yes, yes; it is very easy to guess why you hide yourself here under a false name."

"My good girl," said Rodin, sadly, "I cannot joke further on a subject so painful to me." And the tone in which he spoke was so natural, and yet so mournful, that the kind heart of Rose-Pompon reproached her for having thus pained him; and she asked, in a more subdued manner:

"But how do you chance to be acquainted with Céphyse?"

"I know nothing about her, my dear; but I am aware she is in some manner associated with a fine young fellow, to whom I am most tenderly attached."

"Do you mean Jacques Rennepont?"

"Otherwise called Couche-tout-Nud, who at this mo-

ment," said Rodin, heaving a piteous sigh, "is in prison for debt; I saw him there myself last night."

"You did!" exclaimed Rose-Pompon, clapping her hands with considerable energy. "Why, good gracious me, how very odd! But come, come along with me up to Philemon's apartments, and give poor Céphyse all the news you can about Jacques, for she is dreadfully low-spirited about him."

"My good girl, I wish it were in my power to give her any favourable accounts of this young man, whom I love, spite of his follies and many faults. Alas!" added Rodin, assuming an air of ingenuous benevolence, "which of us has not his faults and errors to lament and amend?"

"I believe you," said Rose-Pompon, swaying herself from side to side, as if still imagining she wore her masquerade costume of the *débardeur*.

"I will go still further," said Rodin, "and confess 'tis for those very follies I principally love Jacques; for after all, say what you will, the finest hearts, the most generous natures, are usually found among those who most lavishly spend their gold, more for the amusement of others than for their own particular gratification."

"Well, I declare!" cried Rose-Pompon, enchanted with a code of philosophy that so entirely resembled her own. "I declare you are the very nicest elderly gentleman I ever heard speak, though you don't exactly look so. But why won't you come and see poor Céphyse, and tell her all about Jacques?"

"What is the good of my telling her what she already knows, namely, that Jacques is in prison? No; what I should like to do would be to extricate the poor fellow from his present unfortunate situation."

"Oh, sir," cried Rose-Pompon, "only do that — only just get poor Jacques out of prison, and see how Céphyse and I will hug you for it!"

"It would be throwing your kindness away, my little

madcap!" said Rodin, smiling; "but of this be assured, I need no offer of reward to induce me to perform the little it is in my poor power to achieve."

"But you hope and expect to release Jacques from that vile prison, don't you, sir?"

Rodin shook his head, and replied, with an air of vexation and regret:

"I did certainly entertain that hope; but, unfortunately, things are now completely altered."

"Oh, why are they?" asked Rose-Pompon, with pained surprise.

"That little joke you played off just now, in calling me Rodin instead of Charlemagne, must have seemed to you very amusing, no doubt, my dear. Of course I know it did not originate with you; you merely spoke the words dictated to you by another person, who, no doubt, said to you, 'Go and have a bit of fun with that old gentleman, call him M. Rodin, it will be quite comical to see how astonished he will look.'"

"That's quite true," replied Rose-Pompon. "I'm sure I never should have thought of such a thing of my own accord; besides, how should I have known that your name was Rodin unless somebody had told me?"

"Well, then, the consequence is that this unknown joker, be he who he may, has, without intending it, done the most serious injury to poor Jacques Rennepont."

"Oh, good gracious!" exclaimed Rose-Pompon, quite overcome with grief, and bitterly regretting the part she had played at the instigation of Nini-Moulin; "is it possible that all this mischief comes of my having called you Rodin instead of Charlemagne?" Then receiving no answer to her inquiry, she added, "But do tell me, sir, if you please, what your name can possibly have to do with any service you intended to render Jacques?"

"That, my dear, I am not at liberty to tell you. All I can say is I am truly sorry for poor Jacques, and regret

it has been put out of my power to help him. But now let me pass, if you please, for my time presses."

"Oh, pray don't go yet, sir!" cried Rose-Pompon. "Do stay a little longer, and tell me, if I give up the name of the person who set me on to call you M. Rodin, will you then interest yourself in poor Jacques's favour?"

"My good girl, I desire to find out nobody's secrets. It is very clear you have been merely the tool and plaything of another in this little affair, and this other may be some person whose anger it might be highly dangerous to provoke; and I can assure you I have no desire to make enemies. No, indeed! I am a peaceable old man, and desire to live on good terms with every one."

Rose-Pompon neither understood nor cared for the fears expressed by Rodin, whose expectations were fully realised by her exclaiming, after a short pause, "I can't quite comprehend what you are afraid of, sir; but, for my own part, I am so miserable to think I should have been the cause of any injury to Jacques, that I will tell you, of my own free-will, all about it. Perhaps, by speaking the exact truth, I may help Jacques, after all?"

"Truth is a jewel," replied Rodin, sententiously, "and frequently clears up many a dark page in daily life."

"And besides," continued Rose-Pompon, "if anybody has done wrong, it is Nini-Moulin. Why should he set me on to say things that would hurt the lover of poor, dear Céphyse? I'll tell you exactly how it was, sir. A person named Nini-Moulin, who is very fond of a joke, saw you in the street, and inquired of the portress who you were. She told him, 'M. Charlemagne.' 'No, no,' said he to me; 'his right name is Rodin. Let us have a lark! Go up to him and address him as M. Rodin; you will see what a start you will give him!' He made me promise on no account to say he had anything to do with it. But since I find that by following his orders I have done harm to poor Jacques, I won't hold my tongue any longer."

At the name of Nini-Moulin, an involuntary expression of surprise escaped Rodin. As the mere pamphleteer, the writer to whose care had been committed the editorship of the journal entitled "The Love of One's Neighbour," Nini-Moulin was not personally an object to be in any way dreaded. But then, with his loquacious propensity to communicate all he knew, which generally came on in proportion to the wine he drank, Nini might be troublesome in many ways, more especially during the frequent visits Rodin proposed paying to the house, in order to carry out his plans upon Couche-tout-Nud through the medium of the Queen-Bacchanal. This possible inconvenience the *socius* determined to guard against.

"So then, it seems, my good girl," said he, "that it is to a M. Desmoulins I am indebted for the little frolic you have just alluded to?"

"No, not Desmoulins," answered Rose-Pompon, "but Dumoulin. He writes in the newspapers, and does religious books — and all that; and defends all sorts of priests and bigots for the sake of the money he gets for it. For, certainly, if Nini-Moulin be a saint, his patrons must be St. Soiffard and St. Chicard,[1] as he says himself."

"Oh, what, your witty friend is mirthful and facetious about himself as well as others, is he?"

"Oh, he is a very good sort of fellow, I can assure you!"

"Stop a bit — stop a bit," cried Rodin, as if trying to collect his ideas; "is he not a man of about thirty-six years of age — stout — fresh-coloured?"

"Yes, I believe you," cried Rose-Pompon; "with a complexion the very colour of red wine, with a nose pimpled all over just like a mulberry-tree!"

"The very same," said Rodin. "I know him well;

[1] The above names are not translatable, further than by saying they resemble in meaning the words St. Lushington and St. Larker.

and a very good, worthy sort of person he is! Ah, then, the joke you had at my expense is of no consequence, since it was merely a friendly one on the part of M. Dumoulin, who is a very excellent man, excepting, perhaps, being a 'leetle' too fond of pleasure."

"Then, sir, you will still try to help poor Jacques — will you not, spite of this stupid jest of Nini-Moulin's?"

"I will do my best, I promise you."

"And I suppose, sir, I had better not let Nini-Moulin know of my telling you it was he set me on to call you M. Rodin?"

"Why not, my dear? Let me advise you at all times to speak the truth fearlessly and candidly."

"Oh, but then Nini was so very particular that I should on no account mention his name."

"But your motive in divulging it was so good, that I can see no objection to your informing him of it. However, my dear, it is your affair and not mine; therefore, do precisely as you please in the matter."

"And may I mention to Céphyse your kind intentions towards Jacques?"

"Candour, my dear girl, never hurts. No harm can ever arise from speaking of things as they really are."

"Poor Céphyse! Won't she be glad?" said Rose, energetically; "and I'm sure she wanted something to revive her just now!"

"Only remember not to exaggerate too much the little I have promised; and remember, I pledge myself to nothing. I do not promise actually to release Jacques from prison, — all I say is, I will try. However, one thing you may safely engage in my name — for I doubt not but since poor Jacques's imprisonment your friend is considerably inconvenienced for means to live, and —"

"Alas, monsieur, you are quite right!"

"Well, then, all I promise is a trifling assistance, which your friend shall receive in the course of the day, in order that she may have the means of living honestly;

and if she behaves virtuously and correctly — why then, I say, by and by we shall see what can be done."

"Ah, sir, you little know how opportunely you have come to the relief of poor Céphyse, — you will be the very saving of her! Well, whether your name be Rodin, Charlemagne, or any thing else, all I can say is, you are a dear, respectable old — "

"Come, come, my dear," said Rodin, interrupting her, "do not allow your gratitude to carry you away. Call me nothing more than a well-meaning old man, my good girl; more than that would far exceed my merits. But only see now how one thing leads to another! Who would have thought when, just now, I confess I felt annoyed at your knocking at the door, that the circumstance would have introduced me at once to a pretty neighbour and the means of performing a good action? Now, go and comfort your friend. This evening shall bring her not only pecuniary aid, but — God willing! — consolation and hope for the future. There are still some left in this world who can pity and feel for the distresses of others."

"Ah, sir, you are an ample proof of that!"

"Nay, the thing is simple and natural enough. What further business or enjoyment have the aged on earth except to promote the happiness of the young?"

All this was uttered by Rodin in a tone of such exquisite benevolence that poor Rose-Pompon could hold out no longer. Her eyes filled with tears, and she exclaimed in energetic words:

"Ah, sir, Céphyse and I are only two poor girls, — not so good as many are, unfortunately; but, for all that, our hearts are not without right and proper feelings. And if you should ever be ill, or in any way afflicted, only send for us, and we will watch and tend you like affectionate sisters. That is all we have to offer in return for your great goodness; but, when Philemon returns, I will make him go through fire and water to serve you,

— that I promise you; and so Céphyse will engage for Jacques, I am sure, that he shall serve you by night or by day."

"That makes good what I said to you, my dear, a little while ago, — giddy-headed people often have warm, generous hearts. Now, then, farewell, till we meet again!"

So saying, Rodin, taking up the basket he had laid down on the staircase beside his umbrella, prepared to descend the stairs.

"Oh, pray let me carry your basket for you!" said Rose-Pompon, taking it from the hands of Rodin, spite of all his attempts to detain it. "Yes, give it to me, — you will walk better without it; and just take hold of my arm! The staircase is so dark, you might slip down and hurt yourself."

"Thank you, my dear! I will accept your kind offer; for I am not very strong."

And so, paternally holding the right arm of Rose-Pompon, while she carried his basket in her left hand, Rodin descended the staircase, and crossed the courtyard.

"Look!" said Rose-Pompon, all of a sudden to Rodin; "do you see that great, broad face stuck against the window of the room on the third floor? There, that is Nini-Moulin! Do you know him? Is it the person you thought?"

"The same!" said Rodin, taking off his hat, and making a very formal and respectful bow to Jacques Dumoulin, who, thoroughly disconcerted, abruptly withdrew from the window.

"Poor fellow! I am afraid he is apprehensive he has offended me with his little joke," said Rodin, smilingly; "but he is wrong — very wrong!"

The latter words were accompanied with a sinister contraction of the lips, which passed unobserved by Rose-Pompon.

"Now, then, my good girl," said he, as together they

entered the little alley, "I have no longer need of your assistance; so make haste back to your friend, and carry her the good news you have got for her."

"Yes, yes, — that I will; for I am all impatience to tell her what a dear old man you are!" So saying, Rose-Pompon darted off up the staircase.

"Hallo, hallo!" cried Rodin; "what a wild little thing it is! She is running off with my basket!"

"Oh, dear, so I am! I'm sure I beg your pardon, sir! Poor, dear Céphyse! Won't she be half mad with joy? Good-bye, sir, — good-bye!" And almost ere the words were uttered, the light, buoyant figure of Rose-Pompon had disappeared amid the intricacies of the staircase, which she climbed with an eager, bounding step.

Rodin then emerged from the alley.

"Here is your basket, my good madame," said he, as he stood on the threshold of Mother Arsène's shop. "I am extremely obliged to you, — infinitely indebted for your great kindness!"

"Oh, pray sir, do not name such a trifle! I'm sure I shall always be delighted to serve you! I hope the radish turned out good?"

"Most excellent, my good madame. Succulent and juicy as could be!"

"Ah, I thought it would! I'm very glad to hear it! Shall we see you again soon, sir?"

"I hope so. Can you direct me to a post-office near here?"

"Yes, sir; there is one at the bottom of the street, if you turn to the right. The third house is a grocer's shop, — there you will find a post-office."

"A thousand thanks!"

"I'll be bound, now," said Mother Arsène, probably moved to gaiety by her contact with Rose-Pompon and Nini-Moulin, "that you have got a love-letter you want to despatch to the girl of your heart?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" said Rodin, jerking himself into a sort of convulsive laugh; "this good lady will be the death of me." Then, all at once resuming his accustomed seriousness of manner, he made a profound bow to the fruit-woman, saying, "Your most obedient, humble servant!"

With these words he passed into the street.

We shall now conduct our readers to the mansion of Doctor Baleinier, where Mlle. de Cardoville was still confined.

END OF VOLUME III.

PART VII. — CONTINUED
THE PROTECTOR

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THE WANDERING JEW.

CHAPTER I.

INSIDIOUS COUNSELS.

ADRIENNE DE CARDOVILLE had been confined in the house of Doctor Baleinier more strictly than ever since the united nocturnal attempt of Agricola and Dagobert, in which the soldier, though severely wounded, had contrived, thanks to the intrepidity of Agricola, aided by the heroic Killjoy, to regain the little door of the convent garden, and escape by the outer boulevard, with the young smith.

Four o'clock had struck, and Adrienne, since the preceding day, had been conducted into a chamber in the second story of the *Maison de Santé*, where a grated window, protected by an outside screen, only allowed a feeble light to penetrate the apartment.

The young lady, since her conversation with La Mayeux, expected to be delivered very speedily, through the intervention of her friends; but she experienced very great uneasiness with respect to Agricola and Dagobert. Knowing actually nothing of the result of the struggle which had taken place on the night in question, between her would-be liberator and the people belonging to the

lunatic asylum and the convent, it was in vain she inquired of her keepers; they would not even reply to her interrogatories.

These fresh incidents still more increased the bitter resentment which Adrienne entertained against the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, the Père d'Aigrigny, and their creatures.

The slight paleness of the lovely face of Mlle. de Cardoville, her beautiful eyes, which appeared somewhat wearied, betrayed her recent anguish. Seated at a small table, with her head resting on one of her hands, and half hidden in the long tresses of her golden hair, she was turning over the leaves of a book, when the door suddenly opened and M. Baleinier entered.

The doctor, a Jesuit of the "short gown," the docile and passive instrument of the will of his Order, was not, as we have said, but half in the confidence of Père d'Aigrigny and the Princesse de Saint-Dizier. He was ignorant of the purpose of Mlle. de Cardoville's being immured; he was also ignorant of the abrupt change of position which had taken place on the previous day between Père d'Aigrigny and Rodin, after the reading of the will of Marius de Rennepont. The doctor had only received on the previous evening an order from Père d'Aigrigny (then obeying the instructions of Rodin) to shut up Mlle. de Cardoville still more closely, and to redouble his severity towards her; and to endeavour, in fact, to compel her (by what means we shall presently show) to renounce her intention of prosecuting her persecutors hereafter.

At the sight of the doctor Mlle. de Cardoville could not conceal the aversion and disdain with which this man inspired her.

M. Baleinier, on the contrary, always smiling, always bland, approached Adrienne with perfect ease and self-possession, and then stepped a few paces from her as if to examine the young lady's features attentively; and

he then said, as if he had been satisfied with the observation which he had made:

"Well, well! The terrible events of the night before last have not had so bad an effect as I feared; the air better, the complexion is more settled, the gesture more composed, the eyes are still too animated, but no longer with that distressing lustre. You were going on so well, — now the cure will be delayed, for the unfortunate transaction of the night before last has excited you more terribly than you yourself can believe; but, luckily, by great care, your restoration will not, I trust, be thrown back for any indefinite period."

Although somewhat accustomed to the audacity of the brother of the Order, Mlle. de Cardoville could not help saying, with a smile of bitter disdain:

"What a barefaced probity is yours, sir! What effrontery in your zeal to gain your money fairly! Never for a moment without your mask, — always with the trick, the falsehood on your lips. Really, if this disgraceful farce is as fatiguing to you as it is disgusting and contemptible in my eyes, you are not half paid for your labour."

"Alas!" said the doctor, in an accent of regret; "always this distressing idea that you have no occasion for our attentions, — that I am acting a farce when I talk to you of the distressing state in which you were when we were compelled to bring you here without your consent. But, except this little proof of rebellious insanity, your position is marvellously ameliorated; you are going on towards a perfect cure. Hereafter your excellent heart will do me justice, and one day I shall be appreciated as I ought to be."

"You are right, sir! Yes, the day is at hand when you will 'be appreciated as you ought to be!'" responded Adrienne, with emphasis.

"Always that one fixed idea!" said the doctor, with a kind of commiseration. "Come, come, be

reasonable! Think no more of such childish imaginings."

"Give up my right and intention to appeal to the tribunal for reparation to myself and retribution for you and your accomplices? Never, sir! Oh, never!"

"Very good!" said the doctor, shrugging his shoulders; "once out of here, *Dieu merci!* you will have other things to think of, my charming enemy."

"You are generous enough to forget the wrong you do; but I, sir, have a better memory."

"Let us talk seriously. Have you really the idea of applying to the tribunal?" asked Doctor Baleinier, in a serious tone.

"Yes, sir! And you know what I decide upon I decide upon with resolution."

"Well, then, I beg of you, I entreat you, not to follow up that intention," added the doctor, in a most emphatic tone; "I ask it of you as a favour, and for the sake of your own interest."

"I think, sir, that you are somewhat confounding your interests with mine!"

"Let us see now," said Doctor Baleinier, with assumed impatience, and as if he was assured of convincing Mlle. de Cardoville, "now would you really have the mistaken courage to plunge into despair two persons filled with nobleness of heart and generosity of conduct?"

"Only two? The jest would be more complete if you would say three. Yourself, sir, my aunt, and the Abbé d'Aigrigny; for these are, no doubt, the generous personages in whose name you invoke my pity."

"Really, mademoiselle, I did not allude to myself, or your aunt, or the Abbé d'Aigrigny?"

"To whom else, then, did you refer, sir?" said Mlle. de Cardoville, with surprise.

"I referred to two poor devils who, no doubt, sent by those you call your friends, obtained an entrance the other night into the adjacent convent, and came from

thence into this garden. The reports you heard were shots fired at them."

"Alas! I was afraid it was so; and they refused to tell me whether or not they were wounded," said Adrienne, with painful emotion.

"One of them was wounded, though only slightly; for he contrived to keep on his legs and get away from the persons who pursued him."

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed Mlle. de Cardoville, clasping her hands fervently.

"Nothing can be more praiseworthy than your joy on learning that they have escaped; but then by what strange contradiction would you now set justice on their heels? That is a singular mode, really, to acknowledge their devotion to your service!"

"What do you mean, sir?" inquired Mlle. de Cardoville.

"For if they are apprehended," continued Doctor Baleinier, not appearing to notice the question, "as they were unquestionably guilty of escalade with forcible entry during the night, they will be assuredly sentenced to the galleys."

"Heaven! and for me?"

"It would be for you, and, what is worse, through you, that they would be thus sentenced."

"Through me, sir?"

"Certainly, if you follow out your intentions of vengeance against your aunt and the Père d'Aigrigny (I do not think of myself, for I am quite protected); if, in a word, you persist in your determination to appeal to the law for having been unjustly immured in this house."

"Sir, I do not understand you — explain yourself!" said Adrienne, with increasing uneasiness.

"Why, child as you are," exclaimed the Jesuit of the short robe, with an impressive tone, "do you think, then, that when justice is once set on the track of an affair, that its course can be checked and its power directed as

one will, and when one chooses? When you leave this abode, you will lodge your complaint against me and your family. Is it not so? Well, what will follow? Why, justice will take the affair up, obtain every information, summon witnesses, and enter into all the most minute investigations. What will then result? Why, let this nocturnal escalade, which the superior of the convent has a certain interest in keeping quiet for fear of scandal, let this nocturnal attempt, I say,— which I, for my part, do not desire to have brought before the public, — be once openly divulged, and as there is mixed up with it a very grave offence which incurs a disgraceful punishment, why, justice will then take the initiative, and set its agents on the pursuit of these offenders; and if, as is probable, they are still in Paris, detained by any duties, or by their business, or under the idea that they are in perfect security (which they may believe, thinking that they have only acted on an honourable motive), they will be found and arrested; and who will have provoked their apprehension? Why you, yourself, by deposing against us."

"Ah, sir, that would be horrible — it is impossible —"

"On the contrary, it would be very possible," said M. Baleinier; "and so, whilst I and the superior of the convent, who, after all, have the only right to complain, desire nothing but to keep this annoying affair perfectly quiet, it is you — you, for whom these poor fellows have risked the galleys — you who will hand them over to justice."

Although Mlle. de Cardoville was not completely the dupe of the Jesuit of the short robe, she guessed that the sentiments of clemency which he pretended to use towards Dagobert and his son would be absolutely regulated by the part she might take in prosecuting or abandoning the legitimate vengeance which she desired to obtain from the law.

In fact, Rodin, whose instructions the doctor followed,

although unconscious of it, was too cunning to say to Mlle. de Cardoville, "If you attempt any quest of justice, Dagobert and his son shall be denounced," whilst they could arrive at the same end by inspiring Adrienne with such fears as to her two liberators as would turn her from her purpose. Without being at all acquainted with the real law of the case, Mlle. de Cardoville had too much good sense not to see that Dagobert and Agricola might, indeed, be very greatly injured in consequence of their nocturnal attempt, and thus be involved in most terrible consequences.

Yet, when she reflected on all she had suffered in this house, and turning over all the just resentments which had accumulated in the depths of her heart, Adrienne found it a bitter task to renounce the deep pleasure of unmasking and exposing all the vile machinations in the face of open day.

Doctor Baleinier looked at her, whom he believed his dupe, with crafty attention, quite assured that he penetrated the cause of her silence and hesitation.

"But, sir," she resumed, without being able quite to conceal her trouble, "admitting that I should be disposed, from some motive or other, not to lodge any complaint, or begin an action at law — to forget the evil that has been heaped upon me, when shall I leave this house?"

"I cannot answer that question, for I am unable to decide on the period when you will be radically cured," said the doctor, with a benignant smile; "you are on the highroad thither, but — "

"Still this insolent and absurd farce," exclaimed Mlle. de Cardoville, indignantly interrupting the doctor. "I ask you, and, if it be necessary, I beg of you to tell me how much time longer I shall be immured in this horrible abode? For I am to quit it some day or other, I suppose."

"Certainly — assuredly — I hope so," replied the Jesuit of the short robe, with an air of apparent regret;

"but I cannot say precisely when. Besides, I must tell you frankly that every precaution has been taken to prevent any repetition of such attempts as we had the night before last. The most rigorous watch has been established, in order that you may not have any communication out-of-doors; and this is all done for your good, and that your poor head may not be excited again so dangerously —"

"Thus, then, sir," said Adrienne, almost affrighted, "the days I have spent here may be considered as days of liberty in comparison with those which are now in store for me?"

"Your benefit is the first consideration," replied the doctor, with an affectionate air.

Mlle. de Cardoville, feeling the inutility of her indignation and despair, heaved a bitter sigh, and hid her face in her hands.

At this instant rapid steps were heard without, and one of the women keepers entered, after having knocked at the door.

"Sir," she said, with a frightened look, "there are two gentlemen down-stairs who demand to see you and this young lady."

Adrienne raised her head; her eyes were bathed in tears.

"What are the names of these persons?" inquired Doctor Baleinier, greatly astonished.

"One of them told me," answered the keeper, "to say to monsieur the doctor that he was a magistrate, and had come here to execute a judicial duty concerning Mlle. de Cardoville."

"A magistrate!" exclaimed the Jesuit of the short robe, becoming purple, and unable to repress his surprise and disquietude.

"Oh, Heaven be praised!" exclaimed Adrienne, rising quickly, and her face beaming with hope through her tears. "My friends have been warned, and the hour of justice is at hand."

"Beg these persons to come up-stairs," said Doctor Baleinier to the keeper, after a moment's reflection.

Then, with his countenance more and more moved and troubled, the Jesuit of the short robe went towards Adrienne with a severe and almost threatening look, which contrasted strangely with his habitual placidity and hypocritical smile, and said, in a low tone:

"Take care, mademoiselle, do not congratulate yourself too soon."

"I do not fear you now!" replied Mlle. de Cardoville, with her eye lighted up and radiant with hope. "M. de Montbron, no doubt, has returned to Paris, and has been informed; it is he who is accompanied by the magistrate, and he comes to free me!"

Then Adrienne added, in a tone of bitter irony:

"I pity you, sir, — you and your friends."

"Mademoiselle," exclaimed M. Baleinier, unable to conceal his increasing trepidation, "I repeat, take care, remember what I have said to you, — your complaint will necessarily include, you understand necessarily, the revelation of all that transpired the other night; take care, the fate, the honour of the soldier and his son are in your hands, — reflect, they have the galleys before them."

"Oh, I am not your dupe, sir; you threaten me covertly; have the courage to tell me that if I complain to this magistrate you will instantly denounce the soldier and his son."

"I repeat that, if you commence your complaint, those persons are utterly lost," replied the lay Jesuit, in ambiguous terms.

A good deal disturbed by the real danger which there might be in the threats of the doctor, Adrienne exclaimed:

"But, then, sir, if this magistrate interrogates me, do you think I will utter a falsehood?"

"You will reply, and tell the truth. Besides," said

M. Baleinier, in rapid tones, in the hope of achieving his purpose; "you will reply that you were in such an excited state of mind for some days that it was thought advisable, for your health's sake, to conduct you hither without apprising you, but that now you are infinitely better, and are fully convinced of the utility of the precautions that were taken for your benefit. I will confirm all this; for, after all, it is the truth."

"Never!" exclaimed Mlle. de Cardoville, indignantly. "I will never be the accomplice of so infamous a falsehood. I will never so degrade myself as to justify the indignities under which I suffered so painfully."

"Here is the magistrate," said Doctor Baleinier, hearing a noise outside the door, "and now, take care —"

The door opened at this moment; and, to the utter astonishment of the doctor, Rodin appeared, accompanied by a man dressed in black, and of a lofty and stern demeanour.

Rodin, for the sake of working out his plans, and from the deepest motives of prudence (which we shall reveal hereafter), far from informing Père d'Aigrigny and the doctor of his unexpected visit, which he intended to pay at the *Maison de Santé*, attended by a magistrate, had, on the contrary, on the previous evening, as we know, given an order to Doctor Baleinier to confine Mlle. de Cardoville still more strictly.

We must imagine the increase of the doctor's astonishment when he saw the officer of justice, whose unexpected presence and imposing aspect already greatly disquieted him, when he saw him enter, accompanied by Rodin, the humble and obscure secretary of the Abbé d'Aigrigny.

As they entered the door, Rodin, still meanly dressed, had, with a gesture at once compassionate and respectful, pointed out Mlle. de Cardoville to the magistrate. Then, whilst the latter, who could not repress a movement of admiration at the sight of Adrienne's exceeding

beauty, seemed to examine her with as much surprise as interest, the Jesuit humbly retired a few paces into the background.

Doctor Baleinier, in perfect amaze, and hoping to make Rodin understand him, made several signs of intelligence to him, endeavouring to interrogate him as to the unexpected arrival of the magistrate.

Another subject of surprise for Doctor Baleinier: Rodin did not appear to recognise him, nor to understand his expressive pantomime, but gazed at him in affected wonder.

At length the doctor, out of all patience, redoubled his mute interrogatories; and then, Rodin advancing a step, stretched out his bent neck towards him, and said, in a very loud voice:

"What is it you want to say to me, M. le Docteur?"

At these words, which completely disconcerted Baleinier, and which broke the silence which had reigned for some seconds, the magistrate turned around, and Rodin added, with the most imperturbable *sang-froid*:

"Since we came in M. le Docteur has been making all sorts of mysterious signs to me. I imagine that he has something very particular to communicate to me; but, as I have no secrets, I beg he will be so good as explain out loud what he means."

This reply, so embarrassing to Doctor Baleinier, pronounced in an offensive tone, and accompaned by a look of icy coldness, again plunged the doctor into astonishment so great that for several moments he was wholly unable to reply.

Unquestionably the magistrate was struck by this fact, and the silence that followed, for he threw on Doctor Baleinier a look of extreme severity.

Mlle. de Cardoville, who had expected to see M. de Montbron enter, remained also in a state of extreme surprise.

CHAPTER II.

THE ACCUSER.

Doctor Baleinier, for a moment disconcerted by the unexpected presence of a magistrate, and the inexplicable conduct of Rodin, soon resumed his *sang-froid*, and thus addressed his brother of the short robe:

"If I endeavoured to make myself understood by signs, it was because, whilst desirous of showing my respect for the silence which this gentlemen (and he looked towards the magistrate) has kept since he entered my house, I wished also to testify my surprise at a visit with which I did not expect to be honoured."

"It is to this young lady that I am to explain the motive of my silence, sir, whilst I will beg her to excuse me," replied the magistrate, and bowing slightly to Adrienne, he continued to address her. "I have had much before me, mademoiselle, in your name; so very serious a charge, that I could not help remaining for an instant mute and observant in your presence, endeavouring to read in your countenance, your attitude, if the accusation deposed to in my presence was founded in truth; and I have now every reason to give the fullest credit to it."

"May I then know, sir," inquired Doctor Baleinier, in a tone, firm, but perfectly polite, "to whom I have the honour of addressing myself?"

"Sir, I am *juge d'instruction;* and I came here to do my duty in a matter to which my attention has been seriously directed."

"Will you, sir, deign to explain yourself to me?" asked the doctor, with a bow.

"Sir," answered the magistrate, whose name was M. de Gernande, a man about fifty years of age, of firm mind and upright principles, and who knew perfectly how to unite the austere duties of his office with the most gentlemanly politeness, — "sir, you are accused of having committed a very gross error, not to make use of a more severe expression. As to the nature of this error, I should rather prefer to believe that you, sir, one of the princes of science, have been completely deceived in your medical opinion, than suspect you of having forgotten all that is most sacred in the exercise of a profession which is almost sacerdotal —"

"When, sir, you have specified the facts," responded the Jesuit of the short robe, with a certain hauteur, "it will be easy for me to prove that my scientific conscience, as as well as my conscience as an honest man, is free from the slightest reproach."

"Mademoiselle," said M. de Gernande, addressing Adrienne, "is it true that you were conducted to this house by stratagem?"

"Sir," exclaimed M. Baleinier, "allow me to observe that the way in which you put that question reflects painfully on me."

"Sir, it is to mademoiselle that I have the honour now to address myself," replied M. de Gernande, sternly; "and I am the only judge of the suitability of my questions."

Adrienne was about to reply in the affirmative to the magistrate's question when an expressive look from Doctor Baleinier reminded her that, perhaps, she should thereby expose Dagobert and his son to a vindictive prosecution.

It was no low and common feeling of vengeance which animated Adrienne, but a legitimate indignation against the most hateful hypocrisy; she would have thought it

cowardly not to unmask this; but desirous to conciliate, if possible, she said to the magistrate, in a voice full of sweetness and dignity:

"Sir, allow me in my turn to ask you a question."

"By all means, mademoiselle."

"Shall you consider the reply I make as a formal denunciation?"

"I am here, mademoiselle, to discover the truth under all circumstances, — no consideration should induce you to endeavour to conceal it for an instant."

"Assuredly not, sir," replied Adrienne; "but, suppose that, having just grounds of complaint, I expose them to you in order to obtain your authority for leaving this abode, shall I hereafter be free not to follow up the charges I may now bring before you?"

"You may unquestionably abandon such charges, mademoiselle, but justice will take up your cause in the name of society at large, if it has been maltreated in your person."

"Would forgiveness then be denied me, sir? A contemptuous forgetfulness of the ills I have suffered would surely adequately avenge me."

"You may concede your personal forgiveness and forgetfulness, mademoiselle; but I have the honour to repeat to you that society cannot evince the same indulgence under the certainty that you have been the victim of a culpable machination; and I have every fear that such has been the case. The manner in which you express yourself, the generosity of your expressions, the calmness, the dignity of your attitude, — all combine to make me believe that the truth has been deposed to before me."

"I hope, sir," interposed Doctor Baleinier, who had now resumed all his habitual phlegm, "that you will, at least, inform me by whom this deposition was made."

"It has been affirmed to me, sir," replied the mag-

istrate, in a tone of severity, "that mademoiselle was conducted hither by stratagem."

"By stratagem?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is true that mademoiselle was conducted hither by stratagem," replied the Jesuit of the short robe, after a moment's pause.

"You assent to it," said M. de Gernande.

"I do, sir; I confess that I employed a means which we are unfortunately compelled to resort to when the persons who have need of our cures have not the consciousness of their sad state."

"But, sir," said the magistrate, "it is asserted, in my presence, that Mlle. de Cardoville never had any need of your cures."

"That is a question of legal medicine, in which the law alone is not called upon to decide, sir, and which must be examined into, and debated in all its bearings," said Doctor Baleinier, with all his usual assurance.

"The question can't, in effect, be more seriously debated, inasmuch as you are charged with having immured Mlle. de Cardoville here, although she was not in perfect possession of all her reason."

"And may I ask for what end?" said Doctor Baleinier, with a slight shrug of the shoulders, and in an ironical tone; "for what purpose could I have committed such an indignity, admitting, for an instant, that my reputation does not place me above such an odious and absurd accusation?"

"You may have acted, sir, with the purpose of favouring a family plot got up against Mlle. de Cardoville with an avaricious design."

"And who, sir, has dared to make so calumnious an accusation?" exclaimed Doctor Baleinier, with wrathful indignation. "Who has had the audacity to accuse a respectable man — and I will add, respected by all —

of having been an accomplice in such an infamous transaction ?"

"I did," said Rodin, calmly.

"You!" exclaimed Doctor Baleinier; and, recoiling two or three steps, he seemed as though thunderstruck.

"Yes, it is I who accuse you," responded Rodin, in a sharp, clear voice.

"Yes, it was this gentleman who, this very morning, armed with adequate proofs, came to demand my intervention in favour of Mlle. de Cardoville," said the magistrate, who retreated a step, that Adrienne might perceive her defender.

During this scene Rodin's name had not yet been mentioned. Mlle. de Cardoville had often heard speak of the secretary of the Abbé d'Aigrigny in terms of obloquy, but, never having seen him, she was ignorant that her liberator was no other than this Jesuit; and she, therefore, looked at him with a glance mingled with curiosity, surprise, interest, and gratitude.

The cadaverous countenance of Rodin, his repulsive ugliness, his sordid attire, would, some days before, have excited in Adrienne a disgust, perhaps, unconquerable; but the young girl, remembering that La Mayeux, poor, mean, deformed, and clad in rags, was endowed, in spite of her unprepossessing exterior, with one of the noblest hearts that can beat in a human bosom, — this recollection was singularly favourable to the Jesuit, — Mlle. de Cardoville forgot that he was ugly and squalid, and only saw that he was old, seemed poor, and came to rescue her.

Doctor Baleinier, in spite of his craft, in spite of his bold-faced hypocrisy, in spite of his presence of mind, could not disguise the extent to which Rodin's denunciation affected him; and he was quite bewildered when he remembered that it was the implacable directions of Rodin, through the wicket of the chamber, which had prevented him — him, Baleinier — from yielding to the

pity with which the despairing anguish of this unhappy young lady, who almost doubted herself of her own security, had inspired him.

And it was he, Rodin — he, so inexorable — he, the attendant demon, the devoted subaltern of Père d'Aigrigny, who denounced the doctor, and brought the magistrate to obtain the release of Adrienne, when, the evening previous, Père d'Aigrigny had again commanded him to redouble his severity towards her!

The Jesuit of the short robe persuaded himself that Rodin betrayed the Père d'Aigrigny most infamously, and that the friends of Mlle. de Cardoville had corrupted and seduced the miserable secretary; and then Doctor Baleinier, exasperated at what he considered as base treachery, exclaimed again, with indignation, and in a voice half choked with rage:

"It is you, sir, who have dared thus to accuse me — you, who but a few days since — "

Then, reflecting that to accuse Rodin as an accomplice was to accuse himself, he assumed an air of excessive emotion, and continued with bitterness:

"Ah, sir, sir! You are the last person I should have thought capable of preferring so shameful a denunciation; it is infamous."

"And who better than myself could denounce such infamy?" said Rodin, in an abrupt and harsh tone. "Was I not in a position to learn, but unfortunately too late, the machinations by which Mlle. de Cardoville and others had been the victims? What, then, was my duty as an honest man? To inform the worshipful magistrate and prove to him what I advanced by accompanying him hither; and this is what I have done."

"Then, *monsieur le magistrat*," resumed Doctor Baleinier, "it is not only myself whom this man accuses, but he dares also to accuse besides — "

"I accuse M. l'Abbé d'Aigrigny," interrupted Rodin, in a loud and piercing voice; "I accuse Madame de

Saint-Dizier; I accuse you, sir, — you, sir, of having, from base and interested motives, immured Mlle. de Cardoville in this house, and the daughters of M. le Maréchal Simon in the adjacent convent. Is this clear?"

"Alas! it is but too true," said Adrienne, with energy. "I have seen the poor, unhappy girls, who made signs to me of their deep despair."

The accusation of Rodin relative to the orphan girls was a fresh and formidable blow for Doctor Baleinier. He was then thoroughly convinced that the traitor had completely passed over to the enemy's camp. Being, therefore, desirous to put an end to his embarrassing position, he said to the magistrate, endeavouring to assume as good a countenance as he could, in spite of his deep emotion:

"I might, sir, confine myself to silence, and thus evince my contempt for such charges, until a judicial investigation shall have stamped them with some authority; but, strong in the rectitude of my conscience, I address myself to Mlle. de Cardoville herself, and I entreat her to say if, even this very morning, I did not announce to her that her health would soon be in so satisfactory a state that she might leave this house. I adjure mademoiselle, by her well-known sincerity, to answer me if such was not my language; and if, when I said so, I was not alone with her, and if — "

"Ah, come, sir!" said Rodin, insolently interrupting Baleinier. "Suppose this dear young lady avows this from pure generosity, what does that prove in your favour? Nothing at all — "

"What, sir!" exclaimed the doctor. "Do you venture — "

"I venture to unmask you without asking your leave. It is unpleasant, no doubt; but what does all you have just said amount to? Why, that, alone with Mlle. de Cardoville, you have spoken to her as if she were really insane! *Parbleu!* That is very conclusive, really!"

"But, sir — " said the doctor.

"But, sir," interrupted Rodin, without allowing him to continue, "it is evident that, in anticipation of what happened, and has happened to-day, in order to have a hole to creep out of, you feigned to be persuaded of your execrable falsehood, even in the presence of this poor young lady, in order that hereafter, if requisite, you might appeal to the fact of your assumed conviction on the point. Come, come! It is not people of right mind and good hearts who bind themselves to such statements or such transactions."

"Really, sir — " exclaimed Baleinier, much exasperated.

"Really, sir," said Rodin, in a still louder voice, and which completely drowned the doctor's; "is it true, or is it not, that you hold in reserve the evasion of throwing this infamous immurement on a scientific error? I say yes; and I add, that you think yourself out of the scrape, because you now say, 'Thanks to my cures, mademoiselle has recovered her reason; what more is there required?'"

"I affirm that, sir, and I maintain it."

"You maintain a falsehood; for it is proved that the reason of mademoiselle was never, for an instant, deranged."

"And I, sir, maintain that the reason of Mlle. de Cardoville was completely impaired."

"I am prepared to prove the contrary," answered Rodin.

"You!" exclaimed the doctor. "And by what means can you do that?"

"Excuse me there!" replied Rodin, with an ironical smile. "You will perfectly understand my reasons for being silent at present." Then, assuming an indignant air, he added, "It reflects no small disgrace on you, however, sir, to have permitted the discussion of such a subject in the presence of this young lady. She might

well have been spared this fresh trial to her feelings."

"Sir!"

"I say again, sir, shame on you for permitting this poor lady to be pained and harassed by so distressing a conversation. Your conduct is alike unmanly and improper, whether you speak the words of truth or falsehood."

"This is past all endurance!" exclaimed the Jesuit of the short robe, exasperated beyond all further restraint. "And I can but accuse that gentleman (pointing to the magistrate) of undue partiality in permitting me to be assailed by such gross and calumnious assertions."

"I beg your pardon, sir!" answered M. de Gernande, sternly. "I am perfectly acquainted with the duties I have to perform, and that I am required, by virtue of my office, not only to permit, but even to provoke, controversy and dispute in argument, the better to arrive at the truth of the affair. It appears to me, even by your own confession, that in whatever state the mind of Mlle. de Cardoville may have been, she is now, at least, sufficiently restored to health, whether of body or mind, to be permitted to quit this establishment immediately."

"Why," said the doctor, hesitatingly, "I certainly see no positive reason against it; what I insist on is that the cure is not sufficiently confirmed, and that I must totally decline being answerable for what may occur."

"Be under no apprehension, sir, I beseech you," said Rodin, "as to any future responsibility attaching itself to you. It is scarcely possible, after the specimens this poor young lady has had of your skill and integrity, she will be induced to trust either her bodily or mental ailments in your hands."

"I have, therefore, no occasion to employ my official authority to compel you to afford immediate egress to Mlle. de Cardoville," said the magistrate to the doctor.

"The young lady is free to depart whenever she

pleases," answered Baleinier; "perfectly so, as far as I am concerned."

"As for the question of your having unduly and unjustly immured the lady under a false charge of madness, that will be duly investigated; the affair being in the hands of the judicial authorities, you will have every opportunity of clearing yourself from so foul a charge."

"I am under no fears, sir, as to the result of such an investigation," said Doctor Baleinier, affecting a calm and composed mien. "My conscience exculpates me from all blame, and I rather court inquiry than shun it."

"I trust it may prove so," said M. de Gernande; "for, however appearances may be against persons, more especially those occupying a position of such eminence as yours, we are always truly rejoiced when they can satisfactorily prove their innocence." Then, addressing Adrienne, he said, "I can well understand, mademoiselle, how painful such a scene as the present must be both to your generosity and delicacy. It will be optional with you either to institute a civil process against Doctor Baleinier, or to allow justice to take its course. One word more: that noble-hearted individual," pointing to Rodin, "who has so fearlessly and disinterestedly espoused your cause, intimated to me that he had every reason to believe you would wish to take immediate charge of the daughters of M. le Maréchal Simon; and I am now going to demand them from the convent, whither they, also, were conveyed under a feigned pretext."

"Indeed, sir," replied Adrienne, "from the moment I first learnt of the arrival of Maréchal Simon's daughters in Paris, my first impulse was to offer to receive them beneath my roof. These young ladies are my nearest relatives, and it would be at once my duty and pleasure to treat them in every respect as though they were my sisters. I shall, therefore, feel my obligations to you

doubly great, if you will permit them to be entrusted to my care."

"It appears to me," replied M. de Gernande, "that, independently of my desire to meet your wishes, my dear young lady, I can in no way better secure the happiness and the best interests of your young relatives." Then, addressing Doctor Baleinier, he said, "Have you any objection, sir, to my bringing the Mlles. Simon here? If not, I will fetch them while Mlle. de Cardoville is preparing for her departure. They can then accompany their kind friend and relative, and all return together."

"I beg Mlle. de Cardoville will make use of this house as though it were her own while awaiting her friends; upon their arrival my carriage shall be at her disposal, to conduct her wherever she pleases."

"Mademoiselle," said the magistrate, approaching Adrienne, "without in any way prejudging the question, which will shortly be brought before the courts of law, I may, at least, express my regret at not having been applied to sooner on your behalf. I might have spared you some days of cruel suffering, for I can well imagine how much you must have had to endure."

"One happy recollection," said Adrienne, with graceful dignity, "will remain, even of these days of sorrow and suffering, that of the generous part you have taken in my case; for which I trust to thank you more fully when again beneath my own roof, and to assure you of my lasting sense, not only of the justice you have accorded me, but also for the benevolent, I would even venture to say paternal, manner in which you have performed the service; and I trust, sir," added Mlle. de Cardoville, with one of her sweetest smiles, "to be able satisfactorily to prove to you that my cure is too complete to leave the slightest apprehensions of a relapse."

M. de Gernande bowed respectfully to Mlle. de Cardoville.

During the short conversation between the two latter

individuals, they had both turned their back upon Doctor Baleinier and Rodin. The latter, profiting by the circumstance, quickly thrust into the hands of the doctor a small billet he had hastily scrawled with a pencil in the bottom of his hat. Scarcely had Baleinier perused the hurried lines than he cast a look of mingled wonder and stupefaction at Rodin, who replied to the glance of wondering surprise by making a private sign, which consisted in carrying the thumb to the forehead, then drawing it twice across in a vertical direction; this done he resumed his usual impassive look and manner.

All this passed so rapidly, that when M. de Gernande turned around Rodin was standing at some distance from Doctor Baleinier, and regarding Mlle. de Cardoville with respectful interest.

"Allow me to conduct you down-stairs, sir!" said the doctor, preceding the magistrate, on whom Adrienne bestowed a farewell salutation, replete with graceful affability.

Rodin now remained alone with Mlle. de Cardoville.

Having conducted M. de Gernande to the very door, Doctor Baleinier paused to read the paper so hastily traced with a pencil, and given to him so mysteriously by Rodin. It ran thus:

"The magistrate will proceed to the convent by the street. Do you hasten with all speed across the garden, and desire the superior to attend to the order I have given relative to the two young girls placed there; it is of the utmost importance she should do so."

The sign made by Rodin, as well as the tenor of this billet, abundantly convinced Baleinier, almost staggering as he was beneath the multiplied surprises and astounding events of the day, that the secretary of the Rev. Father d'Aigrigny, so far from attempting to betray his party, was still acting for the great glory of the Lord.

Still, while implicitly obeying, Doctor Baleinier sought in vain to comprehend the inexplicable conduct of Rodin, in making an affair public it was so necessary to keep concealed, and which might in its results so fearfully involve not only the Rev. Father d'Aigrigny, the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, but Baleinier himself.

We will now return to Rodin, whom we left alone with Mlle. de Cardoville.

CHAPTER III.

THE EX-SECRETARY OF PÈRE D'AIGRIGNY.

SCARCELY had the magistrate and Doctor Baleinier disappeared, than Mlle. de Cardoville, whose countenance was radiant with joy, cried, as she looked at Rodin with a mixture of respect and gratitude:

"Then at last, thanks to you, sir, I am free! Free! Oh, I never thought before that there was so much delight, expansiveness, and ecstasy in that adorable word, liberty!"

And Adrienne's bosom palpitated, her rosy nostrils expanded, her vermilion lips half opened, as if she inspired, with supreme happiness, a pure and vivifying air.

"I have been but a few days in this horrible house," she continued, "but I have suffered enough in my captivity to make a vow to release annually a certain number of poor prisoners confined for debt. This vow may appear to you rather antiquated," she added, with a smile, "but we must not borrow from the middle ages merely their furniture and looking-glasses. Thanks then, sir, doubly; for I make you a participator in this thought of deliverance, which I have just resolved on, as you see, in the midst of the happiness which I owe to you, and with which you seem moved — touched. Ah, let my joy be taken as my gratitude, and may it repay you for your generous succour!" said the young maiden, enthusiastically.

Mademoiselle had, in fact, remarked a complete change

in the countenance of Rodin. This man, lately so stern, so rude, so inflexible with Doctor Baleinier, seemed now under the influence of the most gentle and tender sentiments. His small, viperous eyes, half hid by their dropping lids, were fixed on Adrienne with an expression of indescribable interest. Then, as if he would shake off these impressions, he said, as if speaking to himself:

"Nonsense — folly, no weakness! Time is too precious, — my mission is not yet fulfilled. No, it is not, my dear young lady," he added, addressing Adrienne; "come, come; we will talk of gratitude hereafter. Let us now talk, and rapidly, too, of you and your family. Do you know what has occurred?"

Adrienne regarded the Jesuit with surprise, and said to him:

"What has occurred, sir?"

"Do you know the real motive of your immurement in this house? Do you know what has made Madame de Saint-Dizier and the Abbé d'Aigrigny act as they have done?"

On hearing these detested names pronounced, the features of Mlle. de Cardoville, which but a moment before had been radiant with happiness, became saddened; and she replied, with bitterness:

"Hatred, sir, no doubt animated Madame de Saint-Dizier against me."

"Yes, hatred; and, moreover, the desire to see you despoiled basely of an immense fortune."

"Me, sir! and how?"

"You do not then know, my dear young lady, the interest which you had in being on the thirteenth of February in the Rue St. François for an inheritance?"

"I know nothing of this date nor of these details, sir; but I know, imperfectly, by some family papers, and through a very extraordinary circumstance, that one of our ancestors —"

"Had bequeathed an enormous sum to be divided amongst his descendants, was it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"What, unfortunately, you do not know, my dear young lady, is that the heirs were bound to be present on the thirteenth of February, at a fixed hour; and that, that day and hour past, those who did not present themselves were to be utterly dispossessed. Do you now comprehend, my dear young lady, why you were shut up here?"

"Oh, yes, I do!" exclaimed Mlle. de Cardoville; "to the hatred which she bore me my aunt joined sordid cupidity, — all is now explained. The daughters of General Simon, co-heiresses with me, have been in like manner immured."

"And yet," exclaimed Rodin, "you and they are not the sole victims."

"Who are the others, sir?"

"A young Indian — "

"Prince Djalma?" asked Adrienne, eagerly.

"Has been nearly poisoned by a narcotic for the same motive."

"Oh, heaven!" exclaimed the young lady, clasping her hands with horror; "how horrible! He, he, — the young prince whose character was so noble and so generous? But I had sent to the Château de Cardoville — "

"A man in whom you could confide to bring the prince to Paris. I know that, my dear young lady; but by a stratagem that person was removed, and the young Indian delivered up to his enemies."

"And where is he at this moment?"

"I have but vague traces of him; I only know that he is in Paris, but I do not despair of recovering him. I will make every search that paternal anxiety can suggest, for one cannot too much admire the rare qualities of this poor king's son. What a heart, my dear young

lady, what a heart! Oh, it is a heart of gold, as bright and pure as the gold of his native country!"

"But the prince must be found, sir," said Adrienne, with emotion; "nothing must be neglected to effect this. I conjure you to set about it. He is my relative — he is here alone, without help, without succour!"

"He is, indeed!" observed Rodin, with sympathy. "Poor child, — for he is still a child, only eighteen or nineteen years of age, — thrown into the heart of Paris, into this hell, with his young, ardent, wild passions, with his simplicity and his self-dependence — to what dangers would he not be exposed?"

"It is the more necessary, sir, that we should find him immediately," said Adrienne, energetically, "in order to withdraw him from these dangers. Before I was shut up here, when I learned of his arrival in France, I had sent a trusty person to offer to him the services of an unknown friend. I now see that this idea, with which my aunt reproached me as so foolish, was very sensible, and I now abide by it more strongly than ever. The prince belongs to my family, and I owe him a generous hospitality. I intended the pavilion which I occupied at my aunt's for him."

"But you, my dear young lady?"

"This very day I shall go and inhabit a house which I had been for some time fitting up, having decidedly resolved on leaving Madame de Saint-Dizier, and living alone and as I please. Now, sir, since it is your mission to be the good genius of our family, be also equally generous towards the Prince Djalma as you have been to me and the daughters of General Simon. I entreat you to try and discover the retreat of the poor king's son, as you call him, and conduct him to the pavilion which an unknown friend offers him. Let him not disturb himself about anything; all his wants shall be provided for, and he shall live, as he ought to do, *en prince!*"

"Yes, he will live *en prince*, thanks to your regal munificence. But never was the tenderest interest better placed. It is enough to see, as I have seen, his handsome, melancholy countenance, in order —"

"What! have you seen him, sir?" inquired Adrienne, interrupting Rodin.

"Yes, my dear young lady, I have seen him for about two hours, and more was not requisite in order to appreciate him. His charming features are the mirror of his soul!"

"And where did you see him sir?"

"At your ancient Château de Cardoville, my dear young lady, not far from which the tempest had cast him, and where I had gone for —"

Then, after a moment's hesitation, Rodin added, as if carried away in spite of himself:

"Eh, where I had gone to commit a very shameless, disgraceful, and infamous act, I must confess it."

"You, sir? — at the Château de Cardoville! And to do a shameless act?" exclaimed Adrienne de Cardoville, greatly surprised.

"Alas, yes, my dear young lady!" replied Rodin, unhesitatingly. "In a word, I had instructions from M. l'Abbé d'Aigrigny to offer to your old land-steward the alternative of being sent away, or of lending himself to an unworthy transaction, — yes, to something very closely akin to spying and slander, but the honest and worthy man refused."

"Who, then, are you, sir?" asked Mlle. de Cardoville, more and more surprised.

"I am — Rodin — the ex-secretary of M. l'Abbé d'Aigrigny; a very insignificant person, as you see!"

It is impossible to describe the tone of the Jesuit, at once humble and ingenuous, as he uttered these words, which he accompanied with a lowly reverence.

At this disclosure Mlle. de Cardoville started back.

We have said Adrienne had sometimes heard speak

of Rodin, the humble secretary of the Abbé d'Aigrigny, as a sort of machine, obedient and passive. That was not all. The land-steward of Cardoville, when writing to Adrienne on the subject of Prince Djalma, complained of the perfidious and disloyal proposals of Rodin. She felt, therefore, a vague distrust arise in her mind when she learned that her liberator was the man who had played so odious a part. Still this unfavourable sentiment was balanced by what she now owed to Rodin, and by the accusation which he had just so plainly and unhesitatingly made against the Abbé d'Aigrigny before the magistrate; and then, again, by the very avowal of the Jesuit himself, who, accusing himself, anticipated every reproach that could be directed against him.

Still it was with a kind of cold reserve that Mlle. de Cardoville continued the conversation which she had commenced with as much frankness as enthusiasm and sympathy.

Rodin saw the impression that had been made, — he expected it, — and was not the least in the world disconcerted when Mlle. de Cardoville said to him, as she looked him full in the face, and fastened on him her piercing gaze:

"Oh, you are Monsieur Rodin, — the secretary of M. l'Abbé d'Aigrigny?"

"Say ex-secretary, if you please, dear young lady!" replied the Jesuit; "for you must know very well that I can never again place my feet in the residence of the Abbé d'Aigrigny. I have converted him into an implacable enemy, and I am consequently thrust into the streets. But no matter! What do I say? But so much the better, since, at this cost, the wicked are unmasked and honest people saved!"

These words so uttered, very simply, but with a degree of dignity, roused the pity of Adrienne's heart. She thought that, after all, the poor old man spoke the truth. The hatred of the Abbé d'Aigrigny, thus aroused,

would, of course, be inexorable. And, after all, Rodin had braved it in order to make a noble disclosure.

Still Mlle. de Cardoville replied coldly:

"Since you knew, sir, that the offers you were charged to make to the land-steward of Cardoville were so disgraceful and perfidious, why did you consent to be the bearer of them?"

"Why? — why?" inquired Rodin, with a sort of painful impatience; "because I was at that time completely under the charm of the Abbé d'Aigrigny, one of the most prodigiously insinuating and skilful men, and — I only learned the day before yesterday — one of the most prodigiously dangerous men in the world. He had overcome my scruples by persuading me that the end justifies the means; and I must confess that the end he proposed was great and seducing. But the day before yesterday I was most cruelly disabused, — a peal of thunder awakened me. I pray you," added Rodin, with a sort of confusion and embarrassment, "do not let us speak again of my disgraceful journey to Cardoville. Although I was but the ignorant and blind instrument, I am as much shamed and vexed as if I had acted for myself. It oppresses me — weighs on my heart. I entreat you then, let us rather speak of yourself, and what concerns you; for the soul dilates at generous sentiments, as the chest expands in a pure and salubrious air."

Rodin had made so spontaneous an avowal of his fault, had explained it so naturally, and appeared so sincerely contrite, that Adrienne, whose suspicions had no other grounds, felt her distrust gradually decrease.

"So then, it was at Cardoville," she continued, still keeping her eyes fixed on Rodin, "that you saw the Prince Djalma?"

"Yes, mademoiselle; and, from that brief interview, my affection for him began. I will, therefore, fulfil my task to the end. Be tranquil, my dear lady, — the

prince shall not be the victim of this infamous conspiracy any more than yourself or the daughters of Marshal Simon, although, unfortunately, it has not stopped there."

"Who, then, has it threatened besides?"

"M. Hardy, a man of honour and worth, also your kinsman, and equally interested in this succession, has been withdrawn from Paris by infamous treachery; and then another heir, an unfortunate artisan, falling into a snare skilfully laid for him, has been thrown into prison for debt."

"But, sir," said Adrienne, quickly, "for whose profit was this abominable conspiracy, which actually frightens me, concocted?"

"For the profit of M. l'Abbé d'Aigrigny!" replied Rodin.

"For him? And how? To what end? He was not an heir!"

"It is too long to explain to you now, my dear young lady; you will know all one day. Only be assured that your family has no enemy more inveterate than the Abbé d'Aigrigny."

"Sir," said Adrienne, impressed with a sudden suspicion, "I will speak frankly with you. What have I done to deserve or to inspire you with the lively interest which you testify towards me, and which you extend, in fact, to all the members of my family?"

"Indeed, my dear young lady," exclaimed Rodin, with a smile, "if I were to tell you, you would only smile or not believe me."

"Speak, I beg of you, sir! Do not doubt either me or yourself."

"Well, then, I am interested in, devoted to you, because your heart is generous, your mind elevated, your disposition independent and haughty. Once attached to you, *ma foi!* those belonging to you, who are, besides, all worthy of interest, are not indifferent to me. To serve them is still to serve you."

"But, sir, admitting that you judge me worthy of the too flattering compliments you are pleased to address to me, how could you judge of my heart, my mind, my disposition?"

"I will tell you, my dear young lady. But, first, I ought to make a confession which makes me feel greatly ashamed. Even if you were not so wonderfully gifted, what you have suffered since your arrival in this house ought surely to excite for you the interest of every man with a heart in his bosom!"

"I think so, sir."

"I may, then, thus explain my interest in you. But still, I confess, that would not be sufficient for me. Had you been only Mlle. de Cardoville, very rich, very noble, and very lovely, then, no doubt, your ill usage would have excited my pity. But I should have said to myself, 'This poor young lady is greatly to be pitied, no doubt, but, then, what can a poor man like me do? My only resource is my situation as secretary of the Abbé d'Aigrigny, and it is he that I should first attack. He is all-powerful — I am nothing! To contend with him is to lose the hope of saving this ill-used young lady.' Then, on the contrary, knowing what you were, my dear young lady, *ma foi!* I revolted, even inferior as I was! 'No, no,' I said, 'a thousand times no! So intelligent an understanding, so noble a heart, shall not be the victims of such an abominable conspiracy. Perhaps I shall be destroyed in the struggle; but, at least, I shall have dared to attempt it.'"

It is impossible to describe the mixture of finesse, energy, and feeling with which Rodin pronounced these words.

As often occurs to persons excessively uncouth and repulsive, as soon as they have contrived to have their ugliness forgotten, that very ugliness becomes a matter of interest and commiseration; and we say, "What a pity that such a mind, such a soul, should occupy such

a frame!" and we are struck and, as it were, softened by the contrast.

It was thus that Mlle. de Cardoville began to feel for Rodin; for, in the same proportion that he had shown himself brutal and insolent to Doctor Baleinier, had he been simple and tender towards her.

One thing only deeply excited the curiosity of Mlle. de Cardoville: it was, to know how Rodin had conceived the devotion and admiration with which she had inspired him.

"Excuse my indiscreet and obstinate curiosity, sir, but I should like to know —"

"How I acquired the knowledge of your moral character, is it not? Indeed, my dear young lady, nothing is more simple. In two words I will tell you. The Abbé d'Aigrigny considered me as a mere writing-machine, a dull, mute, blind tool."

"I thought M. d'Aigrigny had more penetration?"

"And you think rightly, my dear young lady. He is a man of unexampled sagacity; but I deceived him by affecting more than simplicity. Do not on that account think me false. No! I am proud, — yes, proud in my way; and my pride consists in never appearing above my situation, however subaltern it may be. Do you know why? Why, because then, however haughty my superiors may be, I say to myself, 'They do not know my value;' and then it is not myself, but the inferiority of my position, which they humiliate. By this I gain two things: my self-love is not offended, and I do not hate anybody."

"Yes, I comprehend this sort of pride," said Adrienne, more and more struck with Rodin's original turn of mind.

"But let us return to what concerns you, my dear young lady. On the evening before the thirteenth of February the Abbé d'Aigrigny brought me a paper written in shorthand: 'Write out this interrogatory,

and add that this document comes to support the decision of the family discussion, which declares, according to the report of Doctor Baleinier, the state of mind of Mlle. de Cardoville to be so alarming as to require her being shut up in a lunatic asylum.'"

"Yes," said Adrienne, with bitterness, "it was concerning a long conversation which I had with my aunt, Madame de Saint-Dizier, and which was written unknown to me."

"Well, I was alone with my shorthand memorial, and began to transcribe it. At the end of ten lines I became struck with astonishment. I did not know whether I was asleep or awake. 'What! mad?' I cried; 'Mlle. de Cardoville mad? Why, they are mad who dare to assert such a monstrous falsehood!' More and more interested, I continued my perusal; and I completed it. Ah, then, what shall I say to you? What I experienced then, my dear young lady, cannot be expressed. It was weakness — joy — enthusiasm!"

"Sir!" said Adrienne.

"Yes, my dear young lady, enthusiasm! Do not let this word shock your modesty. Learn that those ideas, so new, so independent, so courageous, which you uttered with so much energy before your aunt, are, without your knowing it, precisely similar to those entertained by a person for whom you will one day feel the most religious respect."

"Of whom do you speak, sir?" inquired Mlle. de Cardoville, more and more interested.

After a moment's apparent hesitation, Rodin replied:

"No, no; it is useless now to inform you. All I can say to you, my dear young lady, is this, my perusal finished, I ran to the Abbé d'Aigrigny in order to convince him of the mistake under which he laboured with respect to you. I could not meet with him; but yesterday morning I told him, unreservedly, my opinion; he appeared only astonished that I had any opinion at all; a

haughty silence was the manner in which all my arguments were treated. I believed his good faith was alarmed. I urged him, but in vain. He ordered me to follow him to the house where the will of your ancestor was to be opened. I was so blind with respect to the Abbé d'Aigrigny that, before my eyes could be opened, it required the successive arrivals of the soldier, his son, and then Marshal Simon's father. Their indignation unveiled to me the extent of a conspiracy, planned and carved out with consummate skill. Then I understood why they kept you here shut up as a lunatic; then I understood why the daughters of Marshal Simon had been taken to the convent. Then, in fact, a thousand recollections crowded upon me, — payments of letters, memoranda, which had been given to me to decipher or copy, and of which, until then, I had not divined the signification, then suddenly opened my eyes as to the object of this odious machination. To show, sitting where I was, the sudden horror I felt at these infamies would be to lose all. This error I did not commit. I contended in cunning with the Abbé d'Aigrigny. I appeared even more avaricious than himself. If this immense inheritance had been about to become my own, I could not have evinced a more fierce and pitiless desire for the prey. Thanks to this stratagem, the Abbé d'Aigrigny had not the slightest suspicion. A providential chance having rescued the inheritance from his hands, he quitted the house in the utmost consternation, I, in unutterable joy; for I had now the means of saving, of avenging you, my dear young lady. Yesterday evening I went to my office as usual; during the abbé's absence I had time to peruse the whole correspondence relative to the inheritance, so that I can now gather up all the threads of this enormous conspiracy. Oh, then, my dear young lady, before the discoveries I made, and which, but for this circumstance, I should never have thought of making, I remained aghast, — thunderstruck!"

"What discoveries, sir?"

"They are terrible secrets for those who possess them; therefore do not insist on knowing, my dear young lady; but in my scrutiny the league, formed by an insatiable cupidity against you and your parents, was laid bare before me in all its dark infamy. Then the deep and lively interest which I already felt for you and your relatives increased and extended itself to the other innocent victims of this infernal scheme. In spite of my weakness, I determined to risk all to unmask the Abbé d'Aigrigny, I collected the proofs requisite to give to my deposition before justice a sufficient authority, and this morning I left the house of the abbé without telling him of my plans, as he might have had recourse to some violent means to detain me. Still, it would have been base in me to attack him without warning. So, once out of his house, I wrote to him that I had in my hands such proofs of his unworthy conduct as would justify me in attacking him openly in the face of daylight. I would accuse him, — let him defend himself. I then went to a magistrate, and you know — "

At this moment the door opened, and one of the women keepers appeared, who said to Rodin:

"Sir, the messenger you and the judge sent to the Rue Brise-Miche has returned."

"Has he left the letter?"

"Yes, sir, which was sent up-stairs instantly."

"Very well, you may go."

The keeper left the apartment.

CHAPTER IV.

SYMPATHY.

If Mlle. de Cardoville had any suspicions remaining as to the sincerity of Rodin's devotion to her, they must all have disappeared before arguments which, unfortunately, were so natural and irresistible. How was it possible to suspect the least concert between the Abbé d'Aigrigny and his secretary, when this latter, so completely unveiling the machinations of his master, exposed him before the tribunals? And besides, did not Rodin go further even in this than Mlle. de Cardoville herself would have done? What secret plotting of the Jesuit could she suspect? Nothing, at most, beyond that of seeking to acquire, by his services, the profitable protection of this young lady. And then did he not protest against this supposition, by declaring that it was not to Mlle. de Cardoville, the lovely, noble, and rich, that he was devoted, but to the young girl with the lofty and generous heart? And then, finally, as Rodin himself said, "What man, unless he were a wretch, but must be interested in the fate of Adrienne?"

A singular feeling, a remarkable mixture of curiosity, suspense, and interest, united with Mlle. de Cardoville's gratitude towards Rodin; still, recognising beneath this lowly exterior a very superior mind, a grave suspicion came suddenly over her mind.

"Sir," she said to Rodin, "I always tell persons whom I esteem openly of the unpleasant doubts with which they

inspire me, in order that they may justify themselves and excuse me, if I am deceived."

Rodin looked at Mlle. de Cardoville with surprise, and appeared mentally to con over the suspicions he could have inspired, and, after a moment's silence, replied:

"Perhaps you refer to my journey to Cardoville, and my shameful propositions to your good and worthy land-steward? I — "

"No, no, sir," said Adrienne, interrupting him; "you made this confession to me spontaneously; and, understand that, blinded as to M. d'Aigrigny's character, you have passively executed instructions at which your mind revolted. But how is it that, with your unquestionable abilities, you occupied under him, and for so long a time, so very humble a position?"

"True," said Rodin, smiling; "that must surprise you very much; and to my discredit, my dear young lady, for a man of my capacity who remains for a long time in a humble post has evidently some radical vice, — some low and degrading passion."

"It is, sir, generally true."

"And personally true, as far as I am concerned."

"What, sir! Do you avow this?"

"Alas! I avow that I have a bad quality, to which, for forty years, I have sacrificed every prospect of attaining a suitable position."

"And this quality, sir?"

"Since I must make the degrading confession to you, it is idleness, — yes, idleness; a horror of all activity of mind, of all moral responsibility, of all commencement of anything. With the twelve hundred francs (48*l.*) which the Abbé d'Aigrigny gave me, I was the happiest man in the world. I had faith in the nobleness of his views; his thought was mine, his will was mine; my work done, I returned to my little chamber, lighted my fire, dined off vegetables; and then taking up some little-known philosophical work, and dreaming over it, I gave

full freedom to my mind, which, restrained all day, now carried me through the most delicious theories and utopianisms. Then, from the elevation of my exalted feeling, exalted by the boldness of my thoughts, I seemed to rule over my master and the greatest geniuses of the earth. This fever lasted, *ma foi!* some three or four hours, after which I slept like a tired man, and every morning I went cheerfully to my work. Sure of my next day's bread, careless for the future, living on little, awaiting impatiently the joys of my solitary evening, and saying to myself, whilst I scribbled away like a stupid machine. Eh — eh! Still, if I were so inclined — "

"Assuredly, you might as well as another, better than many others, have attained a high position," said Adrienne, singularly affected by the practical philosophy of Rodin.

"Yes, I believe I might have attained it; but, if I had, what good was it? You see, my dear young lady, what often renders people of a certain merit inexplicable to the million is, that they so frequently content themselves with saying, 'If I liked!'"

"But then, sir, without caring much for the luxuries of life, there is a certain attainment of comfort which age renders almost indispensable, but which you entirely renounce."

"Undeceive yourself, I beg, my dear young lady," said Rodin, smiling craftily; "I am a real Sybarite; I must have a good garment, a good fire, a good mattress, a good piece of bread, a good radish, well flavoured with the best gray salt, good clear water; and still, despite this complication of my tastes, my twelve hundred francs are more than enough, and I really save — something."

"And, now you are out of employ, how do you propose to live, sir?" asked Adrienne, more and more interested in the eccentricity of this man, and desirous of putting his disinterestedness to the test.

"I have by me a small purse, which has in it sufficient to maintain me here until the last knot in Père d'Aigrigny's black plot be unravelled. I owe myself this reparation for having been his dupe. Three or four days will be enough, I hope, for this work. After that, I am certain to procure some humble appointment in your province with a collector there. It is not long since that a person who took an interest in me offered me this, but then I was unwilling to leave Père d'Aigrigny, in spite of the great advantages which this proposition opened to me. Only imagine, my dear young lady, eight hundred francs (32*l.*); yes, eight hundred francs, board and lodging. As I am rather surly, I should have preferred living by myself; but, you know, as I should have had so much, I must have put up with this small inconvenience."

We cannot attempt to delineate Rodin's ingenuity in making these little household confidences, so grossly lying as they were, to Mlle. de Cardoville, whose last suspicion disappeared before them.

"What, sir," she said to the Jesuit, in a tone of interest, "do you leave Paris in three or four days?"

"I hope so, my dear young lady, and for many reasons," he said, in a mysterious tone; "but it will be very precious to me," he went on in a serious and earnest air, looking tenderly at Adrienne. "Nay, precious to carry away with me, at least, the conviction that you felt kindly towards me for having only, in the perusal of your conversation with the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, appreciated in you a height of character unequalled in our days in a young person of your age and condition."

"Ah, sir," said Adrienne, with a smile, "do not suppose that you are bound so speedily to return to me the sincere praises which I have bestowed on your superiority of mind. I should infinitely prefer ingratitude."

"Oh, I do not flatter you, my dear young lady, — what good would that be? We shall not be likely to

meet again; no, no, I do not flatter you, — I comprehend you, that's all; and what may seem odd to you is, that your appearance confirms the idea I had formed of you, my dear young lady, in reading your interview with your aunt; and some points in your character which, until then, were obscure to me, are now perfectly cleared up."

"Really, sir, you astonish me more and more."

"Why, really, I tell you my impressions, as I experienced them, and I perfectly explain to myself now, for instance, your adoration of the beautiful, your religious worship of things which appertain to the utmost refinement of the senses, your ardent aspirations towards a better world, your bold contempt for many degrading and servile customs to which women are subjected; yes, now I comprehend fully the noble pride with which you contemplate the crowd of vain, conceited, and absurd men, for whom woman is but a creature belonging to them, by the laws which they have made, after their own image, which is by no means handsome. According to these tyrants, woman, an inferior being, whose soul a council of cardinals deigned to recognise, by a majority of two, ought to consider herself a thousand times too happy to be the slave of these petty pachas who, old at thirty, worn-out, *blasés*, and wearied of every excess, desirous of repose in their exhaustion, think, as they term it, of coming to an end, which they illustrate by marrying a poor young girl who, for her part, is desirous, on the contrary, to make a beginning."

Mlle. de Cardoville would certainly have smiled at the satiric descriptions of Rodin, if she had not been singularly struck by hearing him express himself in terms so appropriate to her own ideas. When, for the first time in her life, she saw this dangerous man, Adrienne forgot, or, rather, did not know that she had encountered a Jesuit of wonderful mind; and that this class unites with marvellous knowledge the resources of

the police spy, and the deep-sealed sagacity of a confessor; diabolic priests who, by means of certain information, some statements, and some letters, can construct a character as Cuvier reconstructed a boy from certain zoölogical fragments.

Adrienne, far from interrupting Rodin, listened with increasing curiosity.

Sure of the effect he produced, Rodin continued, in an indignant tone:

"And your aunt and the Abbé d'Aigrigny treated you as a lunatic because you revolted against the future yoke of such bashaws, — because, in hatred of the disgraceful vices of slavery, you desired to be independent, with the loyal qualities which are inherent to independence; for with the broad virtues of freedom — "

"But, sir," said Adrienne, more and more surprised, "how could my thoughts be thus familiar to you?"

"In the first place, I knew you perfectly, thanks to your conversation with Madame de Saint-Dizier; and then, if by chance we should be both pursuing the same end, though by different means," added Rodin, with intense cunning, and looking at Mlle. de Cardoville with an air of meaning, "why should not our conviction be the same?"

"I do not understand you, sir; to what end do you allude?"

"The end which all noble, generous, and independent minds incessantly pursue; some acting like you, my dear young lady, from feeling and instinct, without reference, perhaps, to the high destiny which they are called upon to fulfil. Thus, for instance, when you were in the midst of the most refined enjoyments, when you were surrounded by all that most enthrals and delights the senses, do you believe that you only yielded to a love of the beautiful, to the desire of exquisite enjoyment? No, no, — a thousand times no; for then you would only have been an imperfect and personally odious crea-

ture, — a mere egotist of refined taste, and nothing more; and that, at your age, would have been frightful, my dear young lady, positively frightful."

"Do you, sir, pronounce this severe judgment on me?" asked Adrienne, with uneasiness; so much did this man impose upon her in spite of herself.

"Certainly I should pronounce it against you if you loved luxury for luxury's sake; but no, no, a very different sentiment animates you," added the Jesuit. "So let us reason together a little. Experiencing the passionate desire of all these enjoyments, you feel their value or their want more acutely than any other person. Is it not true?"

"It is, sir," replied Adrienne, greatly interested.

"Your gratitude and your interest, then, are already compulsorily bestowed on those who, poor, laborious, and unknown, procure for you those wonders of luxury which you cannot do without?"

"My feeling of gratitude is so great, sir," answered Adrienne, more and more overjoyed to find herself so well understood or divined, "that one day I had inscribed in a *chef-d'œuvre* of gold plate, instead of the name of the seller, the name of the maker, a poor artist, until then unknown, and who subsequently obtained the reputation he merited."

"I see I was not mistaken," said Rodin; "the love of these enjoyments renders you grateful to those who procure them for you; and that is not all. Look at me, for instance, neither better nor worse than my fellows, but accustomed to lead a life of privations, which are of no consequence in the world to me. Well, the privations of my neighbour touch me consequently much less than they do you, my dear young lady; for your habits of living render you, of necessity, more compassionate for misery and misfortune than any other person. You would suffer too much for that misery, and would pity and succour those who are suffering."

"Indeed, sir," said Adrienne, who began to find herself under the fatal spell of Rodin, "the more I hear you, the more I am convinced that you define a thousand times better than I did those ideas which have brought upon me so heavily the reproaches of Madame de Saint-Dizier and the Abbé d'Aigrigny. Oh, speak, speak, sir! I cannot tell you with what delight — what pride I listen to you."

And attentive, excited, her eyes fastened on the Jesuit with as much interest as sympathy and curiosity, Adrienne, by a graceful movement of the head, which was familiar to her, threw back her long curls of her golden hair, as if better to gaze on Rodin, who replied:

"And you are astonished, my dear young lady, at not having been understood by your aunt and the Abbé d'Aigrigny? But what have you in common with these hypocritical, jealous, plotting spirits, such as I now know them to be? Will you have another proof of their hateful blindness? Among what they styled your monstrous follies, which was the most wicked, the most damnable? Why, it was your resolution to live henceforth alone, and as you pleased, to dispose freely of your present and your future; they found that odious, detestable, immoral. And yet was your resolution dictated by a foolish love of liberty? No. By an ill-regulated aversion from all restraint and direction? No. By the sole desire of making yourself singular? No; for then I should have blamed you severely."

"In truth, other reasons actuated me, sir, I assure you," said Adrienne, eagerly, and becoming very jealous of the esteem which her character had inspired Rodin withal.

"Eh, I know that well enough, your motives were and could but be most excellent," continued the Jesuit. "Wherefore did you take a resolution so warmly assailed? Was it to brave established usages? No; you respected them so long as the hatred of Madame de

Saint-Dizier did not force you to withdraw yourself from her harsh guardianship. Were you desirous to live alone in order to avoid the eyes of the world? No; for you would be a hundred times more in view in this singular way of life than in any other. Were you, in truth, desirous of employing your liberty badly? No, — a thousand times no! To do ill, people seek the shade, isolation; placed, on the contrary, as you will be, all the jealous and envious eyes of the vulgar herd will be constantly directed towards you. Why, therefore, did you take so bold and so unusual a determination, and so remarkable in a young person of your age? Shall I tell you, my dear young lady? Well, then, you were desirous of proving, in your own person, that every female, with purity of heart, right principles, firm character, and independent conduct, may nobly and proudly leave that humiliating tutelage which custom imposes on her! Yes, instead of leading the life of a slave in revolt, a life fatally devoted to hypocrisy or vice, you would live in the sight of all, frank, independent, and respected. In fine, you wish to have, like man, a free will, entire responsibility in all acts of life, in order to prove indubitably that a woman completely left to herself can equal a man in reason, in wisdom, in correctness, and surpass him in delicacy and dignity. This was your intention, my dear young lady. Your example is noble, it is grand; will it be imitated? I hope so! But your noble attempt will always place you high and loftily, believe me."

The eyes of mademoiselle shone with proud and soft brilliancy, her cheeks were slightly flushed, her bosom palpitated, and she raised her beautiful head with a gesture of involuntary pride; and, at length, completely under the charm of this diabolical man, she cried:

"But, sir, who are you, then, to know — to analyse thus my secret thoughts, to read in my soul more clearly than I read myself, to give a new life, a fresh incentive

to those ideas of independence which have so long germed in my bosom? Who are you, indeed, who make me seem so strong in my own eyes, that now I feel a consciousness that I may accomplish a mission honourable to myself, and perhaps useful to those of my sisters, who suffer a hard servitude. Once more, sir, who are you?"

"Who am I, mademoiselle?" answered Rodin, with a smile replete with philanthropy. "I have already told you that I am a poor old fellow, who for forty years, after having every day served as a machine to write down the ideas of others, returns each evening into his retreat where he permits himself to indulge in his own lucubrations, — a good fellow, who from his garret assists, and even takes a small part in, the movement of five spirits who are marching onwards towards an end more near, perhaps, than some suppose. Thus, my dear young lady, as I told you just now, you and I tend to the same ends, — you without thinking it, and in continuing to obey your rare and divine instincts. So believe me, live, live always charming, always free, always happy! That is your mission; it is more full of Providence than you may suppose. Yes, continue to surround yourself with every luxury of art and refinement. Refine still your senses, still purify your tastes by the exquisite selection of your enjoyments. Reign by mind, by grace, by purity, over the weak and hideous flock of men, who from to-morrow, seeing you free and alone, will come and buzz around you. They will think you an easy prey, within the reach of their cupidity, their egotism, their contemptible weakness. Rail at and stigmatise their absurd and sordid pretensions. Be queen of this world, and be worthy to be respected as a queen. Love, shine, enjoy, that is your part here below; do not doubt that. All those flowers which Heaven has shed on you so abundantly will one day bear fruits ripe and plentiful. You will be supposed to live only for pleasure, whilst, in

fact, you will have lived for the most noble end to which a great and beautiful mind can devote itself. Then, perhaps, some years hence we may meet again, you still more lovely and beloved, I still more old and obscure; but no matter, a secret voice now says to you, I am certain, that between us two so dissimilar there is a secret link, a mysterious communion, which henceforth nothing can destroy."

As he pronounced these last words with an accent so deeply full of emotion that Adrienne trembled, Rodin imperceptibly drew nearer to her, as it were, without walking, but by dragging his feet along, and gliding over the floor by a sort of slow motion like that of a reptile; he had spoken with so much energy, so much warmth, that his pale face was slightly flushed, and his repulsive ugliness almost disappeared before the sparkling glances of his small yellow eyes, then fully opened, round, and staring, and which he fastened steadfastly on Adrienne, who, with her lips half open, and her breathing oppressed, could not take her gaze from off the Jesuit. He ceased speaking, but she listened still. What this lovely, elegant girl experienced at the sight of this little, miserable, dirty, ugly, old man was inexplicable. The comparison, so vulgar, yet so true, of the fearful fascination of the serpent over the bird, may, however, give some idea of this strange impression. Rodin's tactics were skilful and sure.

Up to this time Mlle. de Cardoville had not reasoned either on her tastes or her instincts, but had given herself up to them because they were harmless and delightful. How happy and proud, then, must she be to hear a man endowed with a superior mind, not only praise her inclinations for what she had formerly been so bitterly blamed, but congratulate her upon them as noble and divine.

If Rodin had only addressed himself to Adrienne's self-love, he would have been caught in his own perfidi-

ous snare, for she had not the slightest vanity; but he addressed himself to all that was most elevated and noble in the heart of this young creature, and what he appeared to encourage and admire in her was really worthy of encouragement and admiration. How was it possible for her to escape language which concealed such dark and malicious plans?

Struck by the singular intelligence of the Jesuit, feeling her curiosity greatly excited by some mysterious words which he had designedly let drop, not explaining even to herself the singular power which this pernicious man already exercised over her mind, feeling a respectful compassion when she recollected that a man of that age and understanding was in a most precarious position, Adrienne said to him, with her natural cordiality:

"A man of your merit and your heart, sir, ought not to be at the mercy of circumstances. Some of your words have opened fresh horizons to me. I feel that in many points your advice will be very useful to me in future; in fact, in coming to rescue me from this house, in devoting yourself to other persons of my family, you have testified an interest in me that I cannot forget without ingratitude. A position very humble but certain has been taken from you. Allow me to —"

"Not another word, my dear young lady," said Rodin, interrupting Mlle. de Cardoville with an air of vexation.

"I feel the deepest sympathy towards you. I honour myself for having ideas in common with your own; in fact, I firmly believe that some day you will have to ask advice of the poor old philosopher! In consequence of that I ought to maintain with respect to you the most perfect independence."

"But, sir, it is on the contrary I who shall be obliged if you will accept what I desire so earnestly to offer you."

"Oh, my dear young lady," said Rodin, smiling, "I knew your generosity would always make the debt light

and easy; but once again, I cannot accept anything from you. One day, perhaps you will know why."

"One day?"

"It is impossible for me to say more. And then supposing that I owe you any obligation, how would I then tell you of all there is in you that is good and beautiful? Hereafter, if you owe me much for my advice, so much the better; I shall only be the more at my ease to blame you if I find cause to blame."

"But then, sir, gratitude towards you is forbidden."

"No, no," said Rodin, with apparent emotion. "Oh, believe me, there will come a solemn moment when you will be able to acquit yourself in a manner equally worthy of yourself and me."

The conversation was interrupted by the keeper, who came in and said to Adrienne:

"Mademoiselle, there is down below a little hump-backed work-girl who wants to speak with you. According to the fresh orders of the doctor you are at liberty to receive whomever you please; so I have come to ask if I shall let her come up. She is so badly dressed that I did not dare."

"Bring her up directly," said Adrienne, quickly recognising La Mayeux by the keeper's description; "immediately!"

"The doctor has also given orders to have his carriage placed at your command. Shall I desire the coachman to harness the horses?"

"Yes, in a quarter of an hour," replied Adrienne; and the woman quitted the apartment. Then turning to Rodin:

"The magistrate will not be long now before he returns with Marshal Simon's daughters, I should think?"

"I should think not, my dear young lady. But who is this young deformed work-girl?" asked Rodin, with an air of indifference.

"She is the adopted sister of a worthy artisan, who

risked all to snatch me from this abode, sir!" replied Adrienne, with emotion. "This young work-girl is a rare and excellent creature. Never was a mind more exalted, a heart more generous, hidden beneath an exterior less —"

Pausing when she thought of Rodin, who seemed to her nearly to unite the same physical and moral contrasts as La Mayeux, Adrienne added, looking with inimitable grace at the Jesuit, who was astonished at her sudden silence:

"No; this noble girl is not the only person who proves how real nobility of soul, how superiority of mind, may render indifferent the vain advantage due only to chance or wealth!"

At the moment Adrienne uttered these last words, La Mayeux entered the apartment.

CHAPTER V.

MISTRUST.

Mlle. de Cardoville advanced rapidly towards La Mayeux, and, extending her arms, said to her, in a voice filled with emotion:

"Come, come — there is now no grating to separate us!"

At this allusion, which recalled to her that before her poor and toiling hand had been respectfully kissed by this beautiful and rich patrician, the young work-girl experienced a sensation of gratitude at once indescribable and proud. But, as she hesitated to reply to her cordial reception, Adrienne embraced her with touching earnestness.

When La Mayeux saw herself encircled in the lovely arms of Mlle. de Cardoville, and felt the fresh and rosy lips of the young lady applied with sisterly affection on her pale and wan cheeks, she burst into tears, wholly unable to utter a word.

Rodin, who had retreated into a corner, contemplated this scene with secret uneasiness. Aware of the refusal, full of dignity, which La Mayeux had given to the perfidious temptations of the superior of the Convent of Ste. Marie; well aware of the deep devotion of this generous creature for Agricola, a devotion which had testified itself so boldly with regard to Mlle. de Cardoville a few days previously, the Jesuit did not like to see Adrienne thus display her desire to increase this regard. He thought, wisely, that we should never disdain an

enemy or a friend, how small soever they may be. And his enemy was any one who devoted herself to Mlle. de Cardoville; and then we well know that Rodin united to a marvellous firmness of character certain superstitious weaknesses, and he felt uneasy at the singular impression of fear with which La Mayeux inspired him; and he determined to remember this presentiment or this foresight.

Delicate minds have always in the smallest things nice and graceful instincts. Thus, after La Mayeux had shed many and sweet tears of gratitude, Adrienne, taking a richly embroidered handkerchief, wiped away with gentle hand the moist evidences which inundated the melancholy face of the young work-girl.

This action, so spontaneously kind, saved La Mayeux from humiliation; for, alas! humiliation and suffering are the two abysses which are for ever on each side of the unfortunate! And thus for misfortune, the least delicate attention is almost invariably a double obligation!

Perhaps a smile of disdain may attend the instance we are about to deduce; but the poor Mayeux, not daring to draw from her pocket her old ragged handkerchief, would have remained long blinded by her tears if Mlle. de Cardoville had not come to her assistance.

"You are so good! Ah, you are so noble and charitable, mademoiselle!"

This was all that the work-girl could say, in a deeply affected voice, and touched to the heart by the attention of Mlle. de Cardoville, — more so, perhaps, than she would have been for any actual service done for her.

"Look there, sir!" said Adrienne to Rodin, who came quickly towards her. "Yes," added the young patrician, with pride, "here is a treasure I have discovered. Look, sir, and love her as I love her, honour her as I honour

her. Here is one of those hearts which we are seeking for."

"And which we find, *Dieu merci!*" said Rodin to Adrienne, and bowing to the work-girl.

La Mayeux raised her eyes slowly towards the Jesuit, and — strange! At the sight of that cadaverous countenance which smiled benignantly on her, the young girl shuddered. She had never before seen this man, yet she instantly felt for him almost the same impression of fear and dislike which he had just experienced towards her. Usually timid and embarrassed, La Mayeux could not take her eyes off Rodin. Her heart palpitated violently, as if some great danger was about to beset her. And as the worthy creature only feared for those whom she loved, she drew nigh to Adrienne involuntarily, still keeping her eyes fixed on Rodin.

He was too keen a physiognomist not to perceive the disagreeable impression which he had made, and felt his instinctive aversion against the work-girl increase.

Instead of lowering his eyes before her, he appeared to scrutinise her with an attention so sustained, that Mlle. de Cardoville was greatly surprised.

"Pardon, my dear young girl," said Rodin, with the air of trying to collect his thoughts, and addressing La Mayeux, "pardon me, but I think I am not deceived! Did you not go a few days since to the Convent of Ste. Marie, close by?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, I thought so — it is you! What was I thinking of?" he exclaimed. "It was you! I ought not to have had a doubt on the point."

"What are you alluding to, sir?" inquired Adrienne.

"Ah, you are right, my dear young lady," said Rodin, pointing to La Mayeux. "There is a heart — such a noble one as we are seeking. If you knew with what dignity, with what courage, this poor child, who was out of work, — and for her to want work is to want every-

thing, —if you knew, I say, with what dignity she repulsed the degrading wages which the superior of the convent had the indignity to offer to her on condition of undertaking to play the spy in the family where she proposed to place her!"

"Oh, it is infamous!" exclaimed Mlle. de Cardoville, with disgust. "Such a proposition to this poor child — to her!"

"Mademoiselle," said La Mayeux, bitterly, "I had no work — I was poor. They did not know me — they thought they might propose anything to me."

"I say," said Rodin, "that it was a two-fold indignity on the part of the superior to tempt misery, and that it was doubly great for you to have refused."

"Sir!" said La Mayeux, with modest embarrassment.

"Oh, oh, no one intimidates me!" continued Rodin. "Praise or blame, I say bluntly what comes into my thoughts. Ask this dear young lady!" and he pointed to Adrienne. "I will, therefore, tell you openly that I think as much and as highly of you as Mlle. de Cardoville herself does."

"Believe me, my dear girl," said Adrienne, "there are praises which honour, recompense, and encourage; and those of M. Rodin are amongst the number. I know it — oh, yes, I know it!"

"But, my dear young lady, you must not cast on me all the honour of this opinion!"

"What mean you, sir?"

"Is not this dear girl the adopted sister of Agricola Baudoin, the brave artisan, the energetic and popular poet? Well, is not the regard of such a man the best guarantee in the world, and gives us a better assurance than judging by the mere label — if I may use such an expression," added Rodin, with a smile.

"You are right, sir," said Adrienne. "For, without knowing this dear girl, I began to interest myself deeply in her lot, from the day when her adopted brother spoke

to me of her. He expressed himself with so much warmth and strong feeling that I at once esteemed a young girl capable of inspiring so noble an attachment."

These words of Adrienne, combined with another circumstance, affected La Mayeux so powerfully that her wan countenance became purple.

We know that the poor girl loved Agricola with an ardour as passionate as it was painful and hidden; and any allusion, however indirect, to this fatal sentiment, caused cruel embarrassment to the young creature.

And at the moment when Mlle. de Cardoville had spoken of Agricola's attachment for her, La Mayeux had met the keen and penetrating glance of Rodin fastened on her. Alone with Adrienne, the young work-girl, on hearing the smith's name mentioned, would only have experienced a passing emotion; but it seemed to her that the Jesuit, who, unfortunately, had already inspired her with involuntary alarm, read in her heart, and surprised in it, the secret of the fatal love of which she was the victim. Thence the deep blush of the poor girl, her visible and painful embarrassment, which had struck Adrienne.

A mind as subtle and quick as Rodin's always seeks the cause of the smallest effect; and, putting various circumstances together, saw on the one side a deformed but remarkably intelligent girl, capable of intense devotion, and, on the other, a young artisan, handsome, bold, sensible, and open-hearted. "Brought up together, and sympathising with each other on very many points, they must have the affection of brother and sister," he thought; "but a sisterly love does not cause a blush in the cheek. Can she really be in love with Agricola?"

On the highroad to this discovery, Rodin was desirous to push his investigation to the end; and remarking the surprise which the visible trouble of La Mayeux caused to Adrienne, he said to the latter, smiling and looking significantly towards La Mayeux:

"Ha! you see, my dear young lady, how she blushes, poor dear! when one alludes to the strong attachment of this worthy artisan for her!"

La Mayeux stooped her head, overwhelmed with confusion.

After a moment's pause, during which Rodin kept silence, in order to give his malignant shaft time to penetrate deeply into the heart of the poor girl, the executioner resumed:

"You see, my dear young lady, how it affects her!"

Then, after another pause, perceiving that La Mayeux changed from scarlet to a ghastly paleness, and trembled in every limb, the Jesuit feared he had gone too far, for Adrienne said to La Mayeux, with interest:

"My dear girl, why are you thus agitated?"

"It is plain enough," replied Rodin, with the utmost simplicity, for, knowing what he wished to ascertain, he seemed not to suspect anything. "It is quite plain this dear girl has the modesty of a good and tender sister for her brother. By loving him, by assimilating herself with him, where he is praised, it appears to her as though she were praised herself."

"And as she is as modest as she is excellent," added Adrienne, taking La Mayeux's hands, "the smallest praise either of her adopted brother or herself troubles her, as we have seen, in what is really childish, for which I shall scold her as she deserves."

Mlle. de Cardoville spoke earnestly, for the explanation which Rodin had given seemed to her really very plausible.

Like all persons who, fearing every moment to have their painful secret discovered, and who become assured as quickly as they become alarmed, La Mayeux persuaded herself — she was compelled to do so that she might not sink from shame — that the last words of Rodin were sincere, and that he did not suspect the love she had for Agricola. Then her agony dimin-

ished, and she found a few words to say to Mlle. de Cardoville.

"Excuse me, mademoiselle," she said, timidly, "I am so little accustomed to such kindness as yours, that I make but a bad return for your goodness to me."

"My goodness, my poor girl!" answered Adrienne; "I have done nothing for you yet. But, thank God! from to-day I may keep my promise, and recompense your devotion to me, your courageous resignation, your worthy love of work, and the noble disposition, of which you have given so many proofs in the midst of the most cruel trials and visitations. In a word, from this day forth, if you like, we will not part from each other."

"Mademoiselle, you are too good," said La Mayeux, in a trembling voice; "but I —"

"Oh, take courage," said Adrienne, interrupting her, as guessing her reply. "If you will accept my offer, I shall be able to reconcile with my somewhat egotistical desire to have you constantly with me the independence of your disposition, your habits of occupation, your love of retirement, and your desire to devote yourself to all that deserve commiseration. And, even, I will not conceal from you, it is by giving you the means of satisfying your generous inclinations that I rely on seducing you, and fixing you with me."

"But what have I done, mademoiselle," said La Mayeux, with simplicity, "to deserve so much gratitude on your part? Is it not you, on the contrary, who began by showing yourself so generous towards my adopted brother?"

"Oh, I do not speak to you of gratitude," said Adrienne; "we are quits. But I speak to you of affection and the sincere friendship which I offer to you."

"Friendship! — for me, mademoiselle?"

"Come, come," said Adrienne, with a lovely smile, "do not be proud because you have the advantage of the position. And besides, I have taken it into my head

that you will be my friend; and you will see this will be so. But now I think of it, — it is rather late, to be sure, — but what lucky chance brings you here?"

"This morning M. Dagobert received a letter, in which he was requested to come here, where, as it said, he would have good news relative to that which was most interesting to him of anything in the world. Believing that it concerned the Mlles. Simon, he said to me, 'La Mayeux, you have taken so much interest in what concerns my dear children, that it is necessary that you should come with me. You will see my joy at finding them, and that will be your reward.'"

Adrienne looked at Rodin, who made an affirmative sign with his head, and said:

"Yes, yes, my dear young lady; it was I who wrote to the brave soldier, but without signing or explaining myself any further. You know why!"

"How is it then, my dear girl, that you have come here alone?"

"Alas, mademoiselle, I was, when I came, so overcome by your reception of me, that I could not tell you all my fears."

"What fears?" asked Rodin.

"Knowing that you were here, mademoiselle, I supposed that it was you who had sent this letter to M. Dagobert. I told him so, and he was of the same opinion as myself. When we arrived here, his impatience was so great that he inquired at the door if the young orphan ladies were in this house, and he described them. They told him 'No;' that they were not here. Then, in spite of my entreaties, he would go to the convent to inquire after them."

"What imprudence!" exclaimed Adrienne.

"After what took place the other night!" added Rodin, shrugging up his shoulders.

"It was in vain that I told him," continued La Mayeux, "that the letter did not positively announce

that the orphans would be given up to him, but that he would get some particulars about them. He would not listen to me, and told me, 'If I learn nothing, I will come back to you here; but they were in the convent the day before yesterday, and now that all is discovered, they cannot refuse them to me.'"

"And with such a head," said Rodin, with a smile, "all discussion is useless."

"Indeed, I trust he will not be recognised!" said Adrienne, reflecting on Doctor Baleinier's threats.

"That is not likely," said Rodin, "for they would not allow him to enter the door. That I hope will be the greatest trial he will have; and the magistrate cannot now be long before he returns with the young ladies. I am not wanted here any longer, and other cares call me hence. I must search for Prince Djalma; so be so kind as to inform me when and where I may see you, my dear young lady, in order that I may from time to time inform you of the result of my researches, and to agree upon all that concerns the young prince, if, as I hope, those researches will have good results."

"You will find me in my new abode, whither I propose going upon quitting this place; it is situated in the Rue d'Anjou, and is known as the Hôtel de Beaulieu. But," added Adrienne, after reflecting for several minutes, "upon further consideration, it does not appear to me either correct, or, indeed, for several reasons, scarcely prudent, to allow Prince Djalma to occupy the pavilion in which I used to reside in the Hôtel de Saint-Dizier. A short time since I saw a charming little residence, elegantly furnished, and ready for immediate occupation. A few tasteful embellishments, which might be effected in twenty-four hours, would render it a delightful abode. Yes, yes, that will be a thousand times better," continued Mlle. de Cardoville, after a fresh silence, "and the more so, as it will enable me to preserve a more strict *incognito* on the subject."

"Do I understand, then," said Rodin, whose schemes were dangerously threatened by this new resolution on the part of Mlle. de Cardoville, "that it is your desire the prince should be kept in ignorance, — in perfect unconsciousness of the hand which has been extended to serve him?"

"I not only desire that my name be concealed from him, but that he be kept in absolute ignorance that such a person as myself is in existence, at least for the present. Hereafter — probably in a month's time — I may see cause to change my plan; but I must be entirely guided by circumstances."

"But," said Rodin, concealing by a mighty effort the extreme disappointment he experienced, "will it not be difficult, not to say impossible, to preserve the secret of your beneficence?"

"Had the prince inhabited my pavilion, as I originally intended, I should have had my fears on the subject; his being so completely in the vicinity of my aunt must have enlightened him on the subject of his mysterious friend, and the dread of that is one of my chief reasons for altering my first intentions; but the prince will now be situated in a distant neighbourhood, the Rue Blanche. Who will inform him of that which I am desirous of concealing from him? One of my oldest friends, M. Norval, yourself, and this good girl," — pointing to La Mayeux, — "on whose discretion I rely equally with your own, are the only depositaries of my secret, which I fear not will be carefully kept. To-morrow we will discuss this subject at greater length. The more important affair now is, that you should be successful in discovering the present abode of this unfortunate young prince."

However wrathful and provoked at the sudden determination taken by Adrienne with respect to Djalma, Rodin constrained himself sufficiently to listen with affected calmness and to reply:

"My dear young lady, your wishes shall be strictly

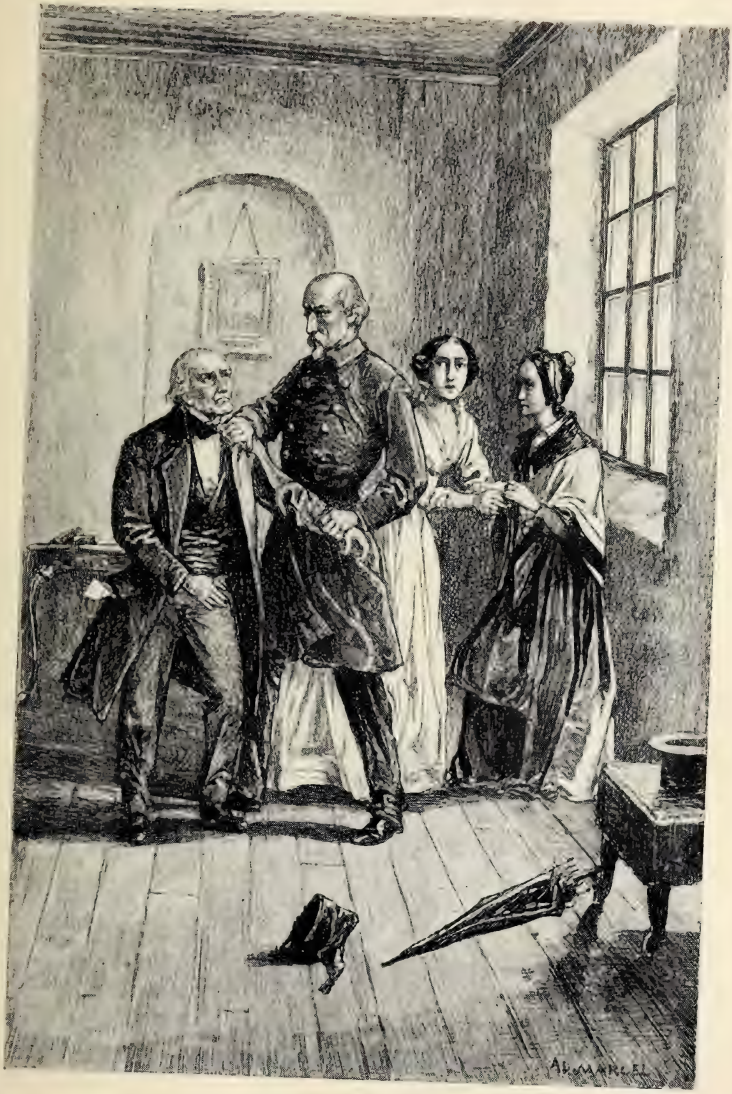
attended to; and to-morrow, with your permission, I will wait upon you to give an account of what but just now you were pleased to style my providential mission."

"To-morrow, then, I shall expect you with impatience," said Adrienne, in a kind and almost affectionate tone; "promise me your further kind assistance, and allow me to reckon upon your friendship, as you may henceforward depend on mine. You will require a considerable share of indulgence to bear with the many proofs to which I shall put your kindness, for I perceive continual necessity for requesting your advice and valuable assistance, and that I shall have to largely increase my present heavy debt of gratitude to you."

"Oh, my dear young lady, my only regret is, that as yet you owe me so little, — so very little," said Rodin, proceeding slowly towards the door, after a profound bow as he passed Adrienne.

Just as he was issuing forth, he encountered Dagobert.

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed the soldier, seizing the Jesuit by the collar with a vigorous grasp, "here is one of them; at length, then, I have got one of the party."



"'YOU ARE CHOKING ME.'"

CHAPTER VI.

EXPLANATIONS.

Mlle. de Cardoville, on seeing Dagobert seize Rodin so rudely by the collar, cried out in alarm, and advanced several paces towards the soldier.

"In heaven's name, sir, what are you doing?"

"What am I doing?" replied the soldier, sternly, and without releasing his hold of Rodin, whilst he turned his head towards Adrienne, whom he did not know. "I profit by the occasion to throttle one of the wretches of that renegade's gang, until he will tell me where my poor children are."

"You are choking me!" said the Jesuit, with a half strangled voice, and endeavouring to release himself from the old soldier's clutch.

"Where are the orphans, since they are not here, and they shut the door of the convent in my face without giving me any reply?" exclaimed Dagobert, in a voice of thunder.

"Help!" murmured Rodin.

"It is frightful!" exclaimed Adrienne; and pale and trembling she addressed Dagobert, with her hands clasped, and saying, "Mercy, sir, hear me, hear me!"

"M. Dagobert," cried La Mayeux, seizing the arm of Dagobert with her weak hands, and pointing to Adrienne, "she is Mlle. de Cardoville! What violence you are using in her presence, — and you must, no doubt, be mistaken."

At the name of Mlle. de Cardoville, the benefactress of his son, the soldier turned around quickly, and let go his grip of Rodin, who, purple in the face from rage and suffocation, adjusted his collar and cravat with great haste.

"Pardon me, mademoiselle!" said Dagobert, going towards Adrienne, still pale with fright; "I did not know who you were, but my first impulse carried me away in spite of myself."

"But what cause of anger has this gentleman ever given you?" asked Adrienne; "if you had listened to me you would know —"

"Excuse me if I interrupt you, mademoiselle!" said the soldier, repressing his ire. Then turning to Rodin, who had reassumed his calmness, "Thank the lady, and be off with you. If you stay here I will not answer for myself."

"One word only, my dear sir," said Rodin; "I —"

"I tell you I will not answer for myself if you remain here!" cried Dagobert, stamping his foot.

"But, in the name of heaven, tell me the cause of this anger," said Adrienne; "and, above all, be not deceived by appearances, but calm yourself and listen."

"Yes, I am calm, mademoiselle," exclaimed Dagobert, with despair in his accents; "but I can only think of one thing, mademoiselle, and that is the arrival of Marshal Simon, who will be in Paris to-day or to-morrow."

"Can it be possible?" said Adrienne.

Rodin made a movement of surprise and joy.

"Yesterday evening," said Dagobert, "I received a letter from the marshal, who has landed at Havre. For the last three days I have tried in every way, hoping again to have the orphans restored to me, since the machinations of these have failed (and he pointed to Rodin with a fresh burst of anger); but no, they are plotting some fresh infamy — nothing is too atrocious for them!"

"But, sir," said Rodin, advancing towards him, "permit me to — "

"Leave the room!" cried Dagobert, whose irritation and anxiety redoubled when he remembered that from one moment to another Marshal Simon might arrive in Paris. "Go, I say! for if it were not for mademoiselle, I should at least have my revenge on one of you."

Rodin made a sign to Adrienne, to whose side he quietly approached, pointed to Dagobert with a gesture of pity, and said to him:

"I will go, sir; and the more willingly that I was quitting the apartment when you came into it."

Then going close up to Mlle. de Cardoville, the Jesuit said, in a low voice:

"Poor soldier! Grief distracts his brain, and he will not hear me. Explain all to him, my dear young lady; he will be convinced then," he added, with a significant air. "But in the meantime," he continued, whilst rummaging in the side pocket of his greatcoat, and drawing out a small packet, "give him this, I beg of you, my dear young lady; this is my vengeance, and it will be sufficient for me."

And as Adrienne, taking the small packet in her hand, looked at the Jesuit with astonishment, he placed his forefinger on his lip, as if to impose silence on her, reached the door by walking backwards on the points of his toes, and left the room, after having cast another look of commiseration on Dagobert, who, in deep distress, with his head bowed down, and his hands crossed over his breast, remained silent to all the anxious consolations that La Mayeux was using to him.

When Rodin had quitted the room, Adrienne, approaching the soldier, said to him, in her gentle voice, and with an expression of touching interest:

"Your sudden entry has prevented me from asking you a question in which I am much interested, — how is your wound?"

"Thank you, mademoiselle," said Dagobert, starting from his painful reverie, "thank you; but it is no great matter, and I have not had time even to think of it. I am sorry to have been so rude in your presence as to turn this rogue out of the room, but my temper gets the better of me, and at the sight of these scoundrels I cannot restrain myself."

"And yet, believe me, you have been too prompt in your sentence on the person who was here just now."

"Too prompt, mademoiselle! Oh, it is not to-day that I met him for the first time. He was with that renegade, the Abbé d'Aigrigny."

"He was; but that does not prevent him from being an honest and excellent man."

"He?" exclaimed Dagobert.

"Yes, sure; at this moment there is but one thought that occupies his mind, and that is to restore your dear children to you."

"He?" said Dagobert, looking at Adrienne as if he could not believe what he heard; "he restore my dear children to me?"

"Yes, and sooner, perhaps, than you suppose."

"Mademoiselle," said Dagobert, suddenly, "he deceives you, — you are the dupe of this old vagabond."

"No," said Adrienne, shaking her head, and smiling, "I have proofs of his sincerity; the first is, that it is he who has enabled me to quit this house."

"Can it be possible?" said Dagobert, amazed.

"Quite true; and what is more, here is something which may, perhaps, reconcile him with you," said Adrienne, giving him the small packet which Rodin had handed to her before he quitted the apartment. "Unwilling to exasperate you further by his presence, he said to me, 'Mademoiselle, hand this to the brave soldier, that will be my vengeance.'"

Dagobert looked at Mlle. de Cardoville with surprise, and opened the small parcel mechanically. When he

had unfolded it, and recognised his silver cross, blackened by years, and the old red riband, faded as it was, which had been stolen from him at the inn of the White Falcon, with his papers, he exclaimed, with a broken voice and beating heart:

"My cross! My cross! It is my cross!"

And in the enthusiasm of his joy he pressed the silver star against his grizzled moustache.

Adrienne and La Mayeux felt themselves deeply affected by the soldier's emotion, who exclaimed, hastening towards the door at which Rodin had gone out:

"After a service done to Marshal Simon, to my wife, or my son, no one could confer a greater favour on myself. And you answer for this worthy man, do you, mademoiselle? And I have wronged him, ill-treated him, in your presence. He has a right to an apology, and he shall have it — he shall have it!"

So saying, Dagobert went out of the room hastily, crossed two rooms, reached the staircase, and, descending rapidly, caught Rodin on the bottom stair.

"Monsieur," said the soldier, in a voice of emotion, and taking him by the arm, "you must return immediately."

"It would be as well, my dear sir," said Rodin, stopping good-humouredly, "if you would make up your mind; only a moment since and you ordered me out, and now you countermand me back again. Where is all this to end?"

"But a minute ago I was wrong, and when I am wrong I am always anxious to make reparation. I have ill-used you, assaulted you before witnesses, and before witnesses I wish to apologise to you."

"But, — my dear sir, I thank you, — but — I am in haste."

"What is your haste to me? I tell you, you must come up-stairs again, directly. If not — if not," continued Dagobert, taking the Jesuit's hand, and pressing

it with equal warmth and compunction, "if not, the joy you have caused me in restoring my cross will be incomplete."

"If that be the case, my good friend, let us go up-stairs again — let us go directly."

"Not only have you restored to me my cross, which I — I — have — have — wept over, — don't say so to any one," said Dagobert, with eagerness; "but this young lady tells me that, thanks to you, these poor children, — mind it is no false hopes, — is it really true — is it really true?"

"Eh, eh, how inquisitive he is!" said Rodin, with a cunning smile. Then he added, "Come, come, make your mind easy, you shall have your two angels, old good-for-nothing."

And the Jesuit returned up the staircase.

"They will be restored to me, and to-day?" exclaimed Dagobert; and as Rodin went up the stairs, he stopped him suddenly by the sleeve.

"Now, my good friend, we are decidedly stopping on our road," said the Jesuit; "are we to go up or go down? Really you knock me about like a shuttlecock."

"True, true! Up-stairs you will explain to us better. Come then as quickly as possible," said Dagobert.

Then putting his arm under Rodin's he hurried him along, and conducted him triumphantly into the apartment, where Adrienne and La Mayeux had remained, greatly surprised at the sudden disappearance of the soldier.

"Here he is! Here he is!" said Dagobert, entering. "I overtook him at the bottom of the staircase."

"And you made me return at a smartish pace," added Rodin, somewhat out of wind.

"Now, sir," said Dagobert, with a serious voice, "I declare before mademoiselle that I was wrong to assault you, to ill-use you, and I offer my apologies, sir; and I am assured, and joyfully, that I owe you, oh, much — very much; and I swear to you that when I owe, I pay."

And Dagobert extended his hand with much heartiness to Rodin, who shook it in a friendly manner, adding:

"Eh, what does all this mean? What is the great service of which you speak to me?"

"This!" said Dagobert, making the cross shine in Rodin's eyes; "but you do not know what it is to me to have the cross restored?"

"On the contrary, supposing that you must have a great regard for it, I thought to have the pleasure of handing it to you myself, and that was the reason why I brought it. But, between ourselves, you gave me when we met such a familiar reception, that I really had not time."

"Sir," said Dagobert, confused, "I assure you that I repent excessively what I did."

"I know it, my worthy friend, and so do not let us say another word about it. But I see you were fond of your cross."

"Fond of it, sir!" exclaimed Dagobert; "why, this cross (and he kissed it) is a relic of mine. He who gave it me was my saint, and he had touched it."

"What!" said Rodin, affecting to look at the cross with as much curiosity as respectful admiration; "what! Napoleon — the great Napoleon — has touched it with his own hand — his own victorious hand — that noble star of honour?"

"Yes, sir, with his own hand he placed it here on my bleeding breast as a heal-all for my fifth wound. So, you see, I believe that if I were bursting with hunger between my food and my cross, I should not hesitate, in order that I might have it on my breast, in dying. But enough — enough! Let us talk of something else. This is very foolish," added Dagobert, rubbing his hand across his eyes; then as if ashamed of denying what he felt, "Yes, yes!" he said, lifting up his head quickly, and disclosing the tear that was rolling down his cheek,

"yes, I weep with joy at having found my cross, — my cross which the emperor gave me, with his victorious hand as this worthy gentleman says."

"Blessed, then, be my poor old hand which has restored to you so valuable a treasure!" said Rodin, with emotion. Then he added, "*Ma foi!* the day will be a happy one for everybody, us I told you this morning in my letter."

"That letter without any signature?" inquired the soldier, more and more surprised. "Did that letter come from you?"

"Yes, it was I who wrote it. Only, fearing some new plot from the Abbé d'Aigrigny, I was not willing, you must know, to explain myself more clearly."

"Then I shall see the orphans again?"

Rodin made an affirmative nod with his head, full of benevolence.

"Yes, forthwith, — in a moment, perhaps," said Adrienne, with a smile. "Well, was it right when I told you that you had misjudged this gentleman?"

"And why did he not say so when I first saw him?" cried Dagobert, in the fullness of his joy.

"For the very trifling reason, my good friend," answered Rodin, "that your first act upon entering was to endeavour to strangle me."

"True, true! I was too hasty. But still how could it be otherwise, when, up to the present minute, I had always seen you assisting the Abbé d'Aigrigny in his villainy against us; and therefore, naturally enough, my first impulse led me — "

"This young lady," said Rodin, profoundly bowing to Adrienne, — "this dear young lady will tell you how unconsciously I have been made to assist the unprincipled schemes of others; but so soon as the conviction of their base and treacherous designs burst upon my mind, I hastened to quit the wrong road I had taken for the straightforward path of honour and rectitude."

To the eagerly inquiring look of Dagobert, Adrienne returned a look of smiling assent.

"That I did not affix my name to the letter I sent you, my worthy friend, it was because I feared by so doing to excite your doubts of my sincerity; and my only motive for requesting you to come hither, instead of proceeding to the convent, was that, as well as this dear lady, I was apprehensive of your being recognised either by the porter or gardener, and the attempt of the other night might make such a circumstance highly dangerous to you."

"But," said Adrienne, "now I remember Doctor Baleinier is acquainted with all that took place, and even threatened to place M. Dagobert and his son in the hands of justice if I took any proceedings against himself."

"Be under no fear, my dear young lady," replied Rodin; "it will be for you henceforward to dictate, and him to subscribe to the conditions imposed; place implicit reliance in me. As for you, my excellent friend, your troubles are at an end."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Adrienne. "An upright and benevolent magistrate has gone to the convent to demand the daughters of General Simon, whom he will immediately conduct hither. But although he concurred with me in thinking it would be better for them to reside with me, I cannot decide upon this step without your consent, for it was to your care their mother entrusted them."

"Oh, mademoiselle," replied Dagobert, "let me thank you from my very heart for this generous offer; my dear children will find a second parent in you. Only after the severe lesson I have had, I must ask your permission not to leave the door of their chamber night or day; and should they accompany you abroad, you must give me leave to follow them at a respectful distance, and the same favour for Killjoy, who has shown himself

a far more watchful guardian than myself. When once the maréchal returns, — and he may be daily expected, — there will be an end to all this anxiety ; and my only prayer is that he may take the charge off my hands before fresh troubles arise. God grant he may come quickly ! "

" Amen ! " responded Rodin, in a firm and determined voice. " I join with you, my worthy friend, in praying for the speedy arrival of the maréchal ; but let M. d'Aigrigny beware, for a terrible reckoning will be demanded by the father for all the persecutions his poor children have undergone ; and yet heavy as is the catalogue, M. le Maréchal knows not all as yet."

" And have you no fear for the safety of the renegade ? " inquired Dagobert, impressed with the idea of the fast approaching meeting between the marquis and Maréchal Simon.

" I have no fears to waste on such cowardly traitors as M. d'Aigrigny," responded Rodin ; " and when M. le Maréchal Simon has once returned — "

Then after a pause of several moments, he said :

" Only let M. le Maréchal deign to hear what I have to tell him, and he will be thunderstruck at the conduct of M. d'Aigrigny ; and he will then learn that his dearest friends, as well as himself, have been marked out as objects of the deadly hatred of this dangerous man."

" How so ? " inquired Dagobert.

" How so ? " answered Rodin. " Why, are not you yourself an example of what I assert ? "

" I ? "

" Do you suppose that chance alone brought about the scene at the inn of the White Falcon, near Leipsic ? "

" Who told you what occurred there ? " asked Dagobert, struck with surprise.

" Had you engaged in the quarrel into which Morok sought to draw you, you would have fallen into a snare purposely laid to entrap you ; and by refusing, you were

then arrested, for want of your papers, and thrown into prison as a vagabond, as well as the poor orphans you were conducting to France. But are you aware that the aim and end of all this violence was to prevent your being here on the thirteenth of February?"

"The more I listen to you," said Adrienne, "the greater is my horror to find to what extent the Abbé d'Aigrigny carried his wickedness, and how widely spread were the means employed to effect his purposes. In truth," continued she, with profound amazement at all she heard, "were it not that you well deserve to be believed —"

"You would be inclined to doubt the truth of what he asserts; is it not so, mademoiselle?" said Dagobert. "That is just my opinion; for, infamous as has been the conduct of this renegade, I yet cannot persuade myself to believe he could be in communication with a wild-beast showman in the most distant part of Saxony. Besides, how could he possibly have known that the children and myself were to pass through Leipsic? No, no, my good sir, this is neither probable nor practicable."

"I am almost inclined to think," replied Adrienne, "that your just abhorrence of the ill practices of the Abbé d'Aigrigny carries you too far, and misleads your judgment, until you attribute to him an almost fabulous extent of power and resources."

After a short silence, during which Rodin alternately regarded Adrienne and Dagobert with a sort of commiserating glance, he said:

"And how should your cross have found its way into the hands of the Abbé d'Aigrigny had he not been in correspondence with Morok?"

"In good truth, sir," replied Dagobert, "the excess of my joy at recovering it put that very natural question out of my head. But tell me, I beg you, by what chance did it fall into your possession?"

"Simply in consequence of these relationships between

M. d'Aigrigny and his agents at Leipsic, which yourself and this dear lady appear to doubt."

"But, then, how came it to pass that, whereas I lost my cross at Leipsic, I find it in your care and keeping in Paris?"

"Answer me this one question. You were arrested at Leipsic for want of the necessary papers and passports, were you not?"

"I was; but I could never imagine by what means both my papers and money disappeared from my bag. I always supposed I had been unfortunate enough to lose them."

Rodin shrugged up his shoulders, and then replied:

"They were stolen from you at the inn of the White Falcon by Goliath, one of the emissaries of Morok, who forwarded his plunder to the Abbé d'Aigrigny, in proof of his having executed the orders given to effect your detention at Leipsic, as well as the young orphans. It was but the day before yesterday I had the key to the whole of this black transaction; both cross and papers were deposited among the records of the Abbé d'Aigrigny, and the papers were of so considerable a bulk that I durst not attempt their removal. Still, hoping to meet you this morning, after the letter I had addressed to you, and well aware what a sacred and beloved relic is his cross in the eyes of an old soldier who served under our idolised emperor, — why, my worthy friend, I will at once confess that I hesitated not to take possession of it in your name, and put it at once in my pocket. For, after all, said I, it is only restoring that which is justly the property of another, and I must not allow my over-scrupulous delicacy to dissuade me from conveying it back to its owner."

"You could not have performed a more praiseworthy action!" said Adrienne; "and I for one, by reason of the deep interest I take in M. Dagobert, feel myself personally grateful to you for acting as you did."

Then pausing for a few seconds, she resumed with much anxiety:

"But tell me, I conjure you, what is the nature of that terrible power with which M. d'Aigrigny seems armed, that he can thus extend his schemes even to foreign lands?"

"Hush!" cried Rodin, in a low whisper, and looking around him with a terrified gaze. "Hush, hush! For the love of heaven question me not on that subject!"

CHAPTER VII.

REVELATIONS.

Mlle. de Cardoville, greatly astonished at Rodin's alarm when she asked him for an explanation as to the very formidable and widely extended power which the Abbé d'Aigrigny exercised, said to him:

"But, sir, what is there so strange in the question that I have just asked of you?"

Rodin, after a moment's silence, looking about him with admirably feigned disquietude, replied, in a low tone:

"Once again, mademoiselle, I entreat you not to interrogate me on so terrible a matter! The walls of this house have ears, as they say vulgarly."

Adrienne and Dagobert looked at each other with increased surprise.

La Mayeux, with the instinct of inconceivable pertinacity, continued to experience a sentiment of invincible mistrust against Rodin. Sometimes she looked at him covertly, endeavouring to penetrate beneath the mask of the man who thus inspired her with dread. One moment the Jesuit met the uneasy look of La Mayeux obstinately fixed upon him, and then he made her a slight, but benevolent, nod of the head, at which the young girl, alarmed at being thus detected, turned away her eyes and shuddered.

"No, no, my dear young lady," continued Rodin, with a sigh, when he saw that Mlle. de Cardoville was aston-

ished at his silence, "do not question me as to the Abbé d'Aigrigny's power."

"But once more, sir," said Adrienne, "why this hesitation in replying to me? What is there to fear?"

"Ah, my dear young lady," said Rodin, with a shudder, "these persons are so powerful, — their animosity is so terrible!"

"Take courage, sir, I owe you too much to permit my aid ever to be wanting to you."

"Oh, my dear young lady," exclaimed Rodin, as though almost offended, "judge of me better, I beseech you. Do you suppose that it is for myself that I fear? No, no, I am too obscure, too inoffensive! But it is you; it is Marshal Simon, and all the other persons of your family, who have everything to fear. Indeed, my dear young lady, I assure you over again, that you must not press me. There are secrets that are injurious to those who possess them."

"But, sir, is it not best to know the dangers with which one is menaced?"

"When one knows the manœuvres of one's enemy, at least one can defend oneself," said Dagobert. "I like an attack in open day better than an ambuscade."

"I must tell you," added Adrienne, "that the few words you have told me inspired me with indescribable uneasiness."

"Then, since it must be so, my dear young lady," replied the Jesuit, appearing to make a great effort with himself, "since you cannot comprehend from my obscure hints, I will be more explicit. But remember," he added, in a serious tone, "remember that your strong solicitation has compelled me to tell you that of which you had, perhaps, better have been ignorant."

"I beg you to speak out, sir, — pray do," said Adrienne.

Rodin, drawing close to Adrienne, Dagobert, and La Mayeux, said to them, with a mysterious air, "Have you

never heard of a powerful association which extends its net over the whole earth, which includes amongst its affiliated brethren the seids and fanatics of all classes of society, which has had, and still has, the ear of kings and grandees, — an all-powerful association which, with a word, elevates its creatures to the most exalted position, and, with a word also, casts them back into the nothingness whence it can alone rescue them?"

"Oh, sir," replied Adrienne, "what can this formidable association be? I never heard it mentioned."

"I believe you, my dear young lady, and yet your ignorance on this subject astonishes me excessively."

"Astonishes you? And wherefore?"

"Because you have lived so long with your aunt and so often seen the Abbé d'Aigrigny."

"I have lived at Madame de Saint-Dizier's hôtel, but not with her, for she inspired me with a legitimate aversion in a thousand ways."

"In truth, my dear young lady, my remark was not just; it was there more than elsewhere that they would have preserved profound silence as to this association; and yet it is owing to it that Madame de Saint-Dizier has enjoyed such strong influence in the world under the last reign. Well, then, now you shall know it. It is the system of this association which renders the Abbé d'Aigrigny so dangerous a man; by it he has been able to watch, pursue, and reach the different members of your family, — those in Siberia, those in India, and others in the midst of the mountains of America; for, as I told you, by chance, the day before yesterday, in looking over the papers of the Abbé d'Aigrigny, I was put on the right scent, and fully convinced of his affiliation with this society, of which he is the most active and intelligent chief."

"But, sir, the name — the name of the society?" inquired Adrienne.

"Well, — it is —" and Rodin paused.

"It is — " said Adrienne, as deeply interested as Dagobert and La Mayeux, "it is — "

Rodin looked around about him, drew by a sign the other actors in this scene still closer to him, and said in a low voice, and laying emphasis on each syllable:

"It is — it is — the Society of Jesus!" and he shuddered.

"The Jesuits!" exclaimed Mlle. de Cardoville, unable to repress a burst of laughter, which was the more hearty, because, after the mysterious and deprecatory precaution of Rodin, she expected a revelation in her opinion infinitely more terrible. "The Jesuits!" she repeated, still laughing; "why, they only exist in books, they are but historical personages, very fearful, I believe; but why thus disguise Madame de Saint-Dizier and M. d'Aigrigny? Such as they are, do they not fully justify my disdain and aversion?"

After having silently listened to Mlle. de Cardoville, Rodin answered with a serious and earnest air:

"Your blindness alarms me, my dear young lady; the past ought to have made you fear for the future; for you, more than any person, have already suffered by the sinister conduct of this society, the existence of which you look at as a dream."

"I, sir?" said Adrienne, smiling, although greatly surprised.

"You!"

"And in what way?"

"Do you ask me, my dear young lady? Do you really ask me, — you, who have been shut up here as a lunatic? Have I still to tell you that the master of this house is one of the most devoted of the lay members of this company, and, as such, the blind instrument of the Abbé d'Aigrigny?"

"Thus," said Adrienne, but without any smile this time, "M. Baleinier — "

"Obeyed the Abbé d'Aigrigny, the most dreaded chief

of this dread society. He uses his genius for evil. But it must be confessed that he is a man of genius; and, therefore, it is that, even out of this abode, you and your family ought to concentrate all your vigilance, all your suspicions on him. For, believe me, I know him; and he does not consider the game as lost yet. You must expect fresh attacks, — no doubt of another nature, but, for that very reason, still more dangerous."

"Luckily you will foresee them, my worthy sir," said Dagobert, "and you will be with us."

"I can do but little, my worthy friend; but that little is at the service of good persons," said Rodin.

"Now," said Adrienne, with a pensive air, completely persuaded by the conviction of Rodin's manner, "now I can understand the inconceivable influence which my aunt exercised over everybody, and which I attributed solely to her connection with powerful persons. I thought it more than probable that she and the Abbé d'Aigrigny were associated with some dark intrigues, of which religion was the veil; but I was far from believing what you now tell me."

"And of how many more things are you still in utter ignorance?" resumed Rodin. "If you knew, my dear young lady, with what art these people surround your mansions with agents who are devoted to them! When they desire to be informed on any particular in which you are concerned, not an action or gesture of yours escapes them. Then, by degrees, they act, — act silently, quietly, and in the dark. They surround you with all possible means and agencies, from flattery to terror; they seduce or alarm you in order to control you, without your consciousness of their authority. Such is their aim; and, it must be allowed, they attain it frequently with most devoted skill."

Rodin spoke with so much sincerity that Adrienne trembled; then, reproaching herself with her fears, she said:

"And yet, no, — no, never; I never can believe in so infernal a power. Once again, I say, the influence of these ambitious priests is of a bygone age. Heaven be praised, they have all disappeared for ever!"

"Yes, they have certainly disappeared, for they know how and when to disperse and disappear under certain circumstances. But it is then, especially, that they are the most dangerous; for the mistrust which they inspire vanishes, and they are veiled in darkness. Oh, my dear young lady, if you knew their frightful skill! In my hatred for all that is oppressive, cowardly, and hypocritical, I had studied the history of this terrible company before I knew that the Abbé d'Aigrigny was a member of it. Oh, what fearful skill is theirs! If you only knew what means they employ! When I tell you that, thanks to their diabolical stratagems, the purest and most devout appearances often conceal most horrible snares — " And Rodin's looks seemed accidentally to fall on La Mayeux; but, seeing that Adrienne did not perceive his insinuation, the Jesuit resumed, "In a word, if you are the object of their pursuits, if it be to their interest to ensnare you, from that instant mistrust all that surrounds you, suspect the most noble attachments, the most tender affections; for these monsters sometimes contrive to corrupt your best friends, and to employ them as auxiliaries against you, — the more to be dreaded, as your confidence is the more blinded."

"It must be impossible," said Adrienne, who revolted at this; "you must exaggerate! No, no; hell has never dreamed of treacheries so horrible!"

"Alas, my dear young lady, one of your relatives, M. Hardy, one of the most frank and generous of men, has been in this way the victim of a most infamous treachery. In fact, do you know what the reading of your ancestor's will and testament has informed us of? Why, that he died the victim of the hatred of these people, and that, at this time, after a hundred and fifty

years' interval, his descendants are still the objects of hatred to this undying society."

"Ah, sir, this terrifies me!" said Adrienne, her blood running cold at the thought. "But is there no defence against such assaults?"

"Prudence, my dear young lady, the most careful reserve, and an endless distrust of all who approach you."

"But such a life is frightful, sir; it is torture to be thus a prey to suspicions, doubts, and perpetual fears."

"Eh, no doubt; and well do these monsters know it! It is in that their strength lies; and they often triumph by the very excess of the precautions which are taken against them. Thus, my dear young lady, and you, my worthy and brave soldier, in the name of all that is dearest to you, beware, and do not give your confidence lightly. You have nearly been their victims, and they will always be your implacable enemies. And you, too, poor and interesting child," added the Jesuit, addressing La Mayeux, "follow my advice. Fear them, and sleep with one eye open, as the proverb says."

"I, sir!" said La Mayeux. "What have I done? What have I to fear?"

"What have you done? Do you not tenderly love this dear young lady, your protectress? Did you not attempt to come to her succour? Are you not the adopted sister of the son of this intrepid soldier, the worthy Agricola? Alas, poor girl, are these not titles sufficient for their hatred, in spite of your obscurity? Ah, my dear young lady, do not think that I exaggerate! Reflect, reflect! Remember what I have told you in reference to the faithful companion in arms of Marshal Simon, relative to his imprisonment at Leipsic! Remember what has occurred to you yourself, who were conducted here in spite of all law and all justice! And then you will see that there is no exaggeration in this picture of the occult powers of this company. Be always

on your guard; and, especially, my dear young lady, in all doubtful cases, have no fear of addressing yourself to me. In three days I have learned enough by my own experience of this mode of action to be able to point out to you a snare, a stratagem, or a danger, and to defend you from it."

"Under such circumstances, sir," replied Mlle. de Cardoville, "and if my gratitude were out of sight, would not my interest point you out as my safest adviser?"

According to the habitual tactics of the sons of Loyola, who sometimes deny their very existence in order to escape from their adversaries, — sometimes, on the contrary, boldly proclaim the active and diffused power of their organisation in order to intimidate the weak, — Rodin had laughed in the teeth of the land-steward of Cardoville, when he had alluded to the existence of the Jesuits; whilst at the convent, in tracing out, as he had done, their means and springs of action, he tried and had succeeded in inspiring Mlle. de Cardoville with a certain amount of alarm, which would gradually increase on reflection, and serve at a later period the sinister projects which he meditated.

La Mayeux experienced still the utmost terror at Rodin; still, when she heard him unmask to Adrienne the sinister power of the Order which he said was so redoubtable, the young work-girl, far from suspecting the Jesuit of the boldness of speaking thus of an association of which he was a member, felt grateful to him, in spite of herself, for the important advice which he had given to Mlle. de Cardoville.

The glance she now gave him (and which Rodin observed also, for he watched the young girl with immovable attention) was full of gratitude and wonder.

Understanding that expression, and desirous of increasing its effect, and endeavouring to eradicate the distrust which had crept into La Mayeux's mind, and to

anticipate a disclosure which must be made sooner or later, the Jesuit appeared to have forgotten something very important, and exclaimed, striking his forehead:

"What was I thinking of?"

Then addressing La Mayeux:

"Do you know, my dear girl, where your sister is?"

Equally abashed and saddened at the question, La Mayeux replied, blushing deeply as she spoke, for she remembered her last meeting with the brilliant Queen-Bacchanal:

"I have not seen my sister for some days, sir."

"Well, my dear girl, she is not very happy at this moment," said Rodin. "I have promised one of her friends to send her some small assistance; and, having spoken to a charitable individual, see what he gave me for her!" And he drew from his pocket a rouleau sealed up, which he handed to La Mayeux, who was as much affected as astonished.

"You have a sister who is unhappy, and I knew nothing about it!" said Adrienne to the workwoman. "Ah, my child, that's wrong!"

"Do not blame her," said Rodin. "In the first place, she did not know that her sister was unhappy, and then she could not ask you, my dear young lady, to interest yourself for her."

And, as Mlle. de Cardoville looked at Rodin with astonishment, he added, addressing himself to La Mayeux:

"Is it not true, my girl?"

"Yes, sir," replied the work-girl, lowering her eyes and blushing again. Then she added, with quickness and anxiety:

"But my sister, sir, where did you see her? Where is she? In what way is she unhappy?"

"It would be too long a tale to tell you now, my dear girl; but go as quickly as you can to the Rue Clovis, to the greengrocer's shop, ask to speak to your sister from M. Charlemagne, or M. Rodin, whichever you please,—

for I am known there under my baptismal as well as my family name, — and you will learn all particulars. Only tell your sister that, if she conducts herself properly, and continues to adhere to her present good resolutions, there are persons who continue to take an interest in her welfare."

La Mayeux, more and more astonished, was about to reply to M. Rodin, when the door opened, and M. de Gernande entered.

The magistrate's countenance was serious, and even sad.

"Where are Marshal Simon's daughters?" exclaimed Mlle. de Cardoville.

"Unfortunately, they have not accompanied me," replied the magistrate.

"And where are they, sir? What has become of them? They were in the convent the day before yesterday!" cried Dagobert, aghast at this complete destruction of his hopes.

Scarcely had the soldier uttered these words, than, profiting by the movement of the actors in this scene, who were grouped closely around the magistrate, Rodin retreated a few steps, reached the door quickly, and withdrew, without any one observing his exit.

Whilst the soldier, thus completely driven to despair, was gazing at M. de Gernande, and awaiting his reply in the deepest anguish, Adrienne said to the magistrate:

"But, sir, when you reached the convent, what answer did the superior make you on the subject of the two dear girls?"

"The superior refused to explain herself, mademoiselle. 'You assert, sir,' she said to me, 'that the young persons you speak of are detained here against their will. Well, then, since the law gives you the right to examine this house, pray exercise that power and search it.' 'But, madame, be so kind as to reply to me positively,' I said to the superior, 'do you declare yourself

completely a stranger to this abstraction of the young girls whom I am here to demand?' 'I have nothing to say on the subject, sir. You say you are authorised to make a search — make it, then!' Unable to obtain any other explanations," added the magistrate, "I have visited the convent in every part, and had every apartment opened. I regret to say I have not found any trace of the young ladies."

"They have conveyed them away to some other place," exclaimed Dagobert; "and who knows? — very ill, perhaps! They will kill them — they will kill them!" he exclaimed, in agonised accents.

"After such a refusal, what can we do? What is next to be thought of? Ah, pray, sir, aid us with your advice — you, our counsellor — our aid!" said Adrienne, turning to speak to Rodin, whom she thought behind her. "What would be —"

Then, perceiving that the Jesuit had suddenly disappeared, she said to La Mayeux, with uneasiness:

"Where is M. Rodin?"

"I do not know, mademoiselle," replied La Mayeux, looking about her; "he is not here."

"It is very singular," said Adrienne, "that he should disappear so suddenly!"

"Didn't I tell you he was a traitor?" exclaimed Dagobert, stamping on the ground with rage. "Ah, they understand each other!"

"No, no," cried Mlle. de Cardoville, "do not think so, although the departure of M. Rodin is exceedingly to be lamented; for in this terrible dilemma, owing to the situation which M. Rodin occupied under M. d'Aigrigny, he might, perhaps, have afforded us very confidential information."

"I assure you, mademoiselle, that I quite relied upon it," said M. de Gernande; "and I returned here not only to inform you of my want of success, but to ask of this worthy and conscientious man, who has boldly

unveiled these odious machinations, to give us all the information in his power in our painful position."

Strange to say, but for some time Dagobert had been so deeply absorbed that he had not paid the slightest attention to what the magistrate said, although on a subject in which he was so much interested. He did not even remark the departure of M. de Gernande, who withdrew, after having promised Adrienne to leave no means untried to learn every particular connected with the disappearance of the two orphan children.

Uneasy at Dagobert's silence, and desirous of leaving the house immediately, and of inducing him to accompany her, Adrienne, after having exchanged a glance full of meaning with La Mayeux, approached the soldier, when rapid footsteps were suddenly heard outside the apartment, and a manly and powerful voice was heard exclaiming impatiently:

"Where is he? Where is he?"

At this voice Dagobert started violently, gave a cry, and was bounding towards the door, when it opened.

Marshal Simon entered.

CHAPTER VIII.

PIERRE SIMON.

Marshal Pierre Simon, Duc de Ligny, was of tall stature, and was plainly dressed in a blue frock coat, buttoned up close to the chin, and in the top buttonhole was a small piece of red riband.

It was impossible to see a physiognomy more frank, more open, and of more chivalrous distinction than the marshal's. His forehead was broad, his nose aquiline, the chin strongly defiñed, and his features tanned by exposure to the suns of India. His hair, cut very short, was gray about the temples, but his eyebrows were still of jet-black, as well as his large, drooping moustache; his free, bold, and decided carriage evinced his military breeding and tendencies; and a man of the people, a man of war and energy, the warm cordiality of his language breathed benevolence and sympathy. As enlightened as intrepid, as generous as sincere, there was in him most especially a high degree of plebeian pride; and, whilst others were proud of noble birth, he was proud of his obscure origin, because it had been ennobled by the fine character of his father, a stern Republican, and an intelligent and industrious artisan, who had been for forty years the honour, boast, and example of all laborious workmen.

When he accepted with gratitude the aristocratic title with which the emperor had invested him, Pierre Simon had acted like those delicate-minded persons who, receiving with the warmth of friendship a gift perfectly

useless, yet accept it with gratitude, as coming from the hand that presents it.

The religious adoration of Pierre Simon towards the emperor had never been blind; in proportion as his devotion and ardent love for his idol had been instinctive, and, as we may term it, fatal, so was his admiration serious and rational. Far from resembling those swordsmen who love battle only for battle's sake, not only did Marshal Simon admire his hero as the greatest captain in the world, but he admired him, above all, because he knew that the emperor had only made or carried on war in the hopes of one day giving peace to the whole world; and if peace, acceded to by glory and power, is great, fertile, and magnificent, peace accepted by convention is barren, miserable, and dishonourable.

The son of an artisan, Pierre Simon admired the emperor, also, because this imperial *parvenu* had always known how to vibrate gloriously on the popular fibre, and, remembering the people from whom he himself had sprung, he had fraternally invited them to enjoy with him all the pomps of aristocracy and royalty.

The features of Marshal Simon as he entered the chamber gave evidence of the deep feelings which were struggling within his breast, but at the sight of Dagobert a bright flush of joy illumined his manly countenance, as, hurrying with extended arms towards the soldier, he exclaimed:

"My friend! my tried — my faithful friend!"

Poor Dagobert received in silence the warm and grateful pressure of the marshal, who, releasing him from his arms, and fixing on him his earnest and tearful gaze, said, in an agitated tone and with quivering lips:

"You arrived in time to be present on the thirteenth of February, did you not?"

"I did, general; but everything relative to that day is now deferred for a period of four months."

"And my wife — my child?"

A cold shudder shook the iron frame of Dagobert at this question. He drooped his head in mournful silence.

"Are they not here?" inquired Pierre Simon, with more surprise than uneasiness. "I learned at your abode that neither my wife nor child was there, but that I should find you at this house, and without a moment's pause I hastened hither. They are not then here?"

"General," replied Dagobert, growing ghastly pale — "general —" Then, wiping from his brows the large drops of cold perspiration which bedewed them, he strove in vain to frame a speech. His dried lips and parched throat deprived him of all power to utter.

"Speak, for the love of God!" cried Pierre Simon, becoming almost as pallid as the soldier himself. Then, seizing the old man by the arm, he added, "Your words, your manner, fill me with a dread of I know not what. Tell me, what does all this mean?"

At this moment Adrienne advanced, her charming face beaming with soft yet mournful sympathy. Pitying alike the embarrassment of Dagobert and the cruel anxiety of the marshal, she sought to relieve both, and addressing Pierre Simon, in a voice of compassionating gentleness, she said:

"Permit me to introduce myself, at this trying moment, as Adrienne de Cardoville, and still more, as the near relation of your dear children."

Equally struck with the splendid beauty of Adrienne as by her words, Pierre Simon started back with surprise, while, in an agitated manner, he exclaimed:

"You, madame, the relative of — my — children?"

And as he emphatically pronounced the last words he gazed in bewildered inquiry on the countenance of Dagobert.

"Yes, M. le Maréchal," replied Adrienne, quickly, "of your children; and may the affection of those charming twin sisters —"

"Twin sisters!" cried Pierre Simon, interrupting Mlle. de Cardoville with a burst of joy he found it impossible to restrain.

"Two daughters to welcome me, when I had expected but one! Oh, what a double source of happiness must this have been to their dear mother!" Then, addressing Adrienne, he added, "Your pardon, mademoiselle, for so uncourteously omitting to thank you as I ought for the welcome tidings you have afforded me. My only excuse is in my joy at finding, after a separation of seventeen years from my wife, that I have now three claimants on my affection instead of one. Instruct me, I pray you, in the full extent, of the debt of gratitude I owe you. You belong to our family, — I am, doubtless, beneath your hospitable roof, where my wife and children have also found shelter and protection. Is it not so? If you are of opinion that my abrupt appearance may be too much for them, I will wait till they are prepared to receive me. But, mademoiselle, let me entreat of you, who I am sure are as good as beautiful, to take pity on my impatience, and break the news of my arrival as quickly as possible to the three beloved beings I so long to fold to my heart."

Dagobert, more and more agitated, carefully avoided meeting the inquiring glances of the maréchal, while his tall, sinewy frame shook, as though stricken with palsy, while Adrienne, shrinking from the cruel blow she felt must be inflicted on the fond hopes of the doting husband, cast down her tearful eyes, and waited in painful suspense for what must follow.

Surprised at a silence which both astonished and alarmed him, Pierre Simon gazed alternately from the soldier to Mlle. de Cardoville, when, struck by the deep dejection of their countenances, he exclaimed, in a tone of deep distress:

"Dagobert, as you are a man, a husband, and a father, tell me — tell me what is this fearful thing you are concealing from me!"

Thus appealed to, the old soldier sought for words to tell his dreadful tale, but in vain, he could only indistinctly articulate:

"General, — indeed — I — "

"Do you, then, mademoiselle," cried Pierre Simon, "take pity on feelings amounting to agony worse than the most dreadful reality. My former apprehensions return — I fear I know not what — something fatal has occurred. Does any danger threaten my wife or my children? Why are they not here to welcome me? Perhaps they are ill. Oh, speak! I conjure you, speak!"

"Reassure yourself, I pray, M. le Maréchal," said Adrienne, kindly, "your daughters have been slightly indisposed, — the result of their long and fatiguing journey; but there is nothing to apprehend on their account — "

"Gracious Heaven!" interrupted the maréchal; "'tis then my wife who is in danger?"

"Arm yourself with courage, M. le Maréchal," said Mlle. de Cardoville, sorrowfully; "you must henceforward look for happiness in the tender affection of the two interesting beings left to love and console you!"

"General," uttered Dagobert, in a steady, solemn voice, "I quitted Siberia in company of — your daughters only."

"And their mother — their adored mother!" exclaimed Simon, in a tone of thrilling agony.

"The day after her death," replied the old soldier, "I set out with her two children."

"Dead!" cried Pierre Simon, with heartrending grief, "dead! My Eva? Oh, it cannot — cannot be!"

No voice arose in contradiction to the fatal tale, — a solemn silence attested its melancholy truth.

As the full conviction of his misfortune pressed on the mind of the maréchal, he staggered as though his very brain were giving way, supported himself for an instant by holding the back of a chair, then, sinking into the chair itself, concealed his features with both his hands, while the convulsive heaving of his breast abundantly testified the overpowering anguish under which he suffered.

For some time nothing was heard but the stifled sobs which arose from the labouring bosom and overcharged heart of Pierre Simon, who, most passionately loving his wife (for the many reasons detailed at the commencement of this history), had, as it were, by one of those singular compromises which a man, long and cruelly ill-treated by fortune and by fate, is apt to make with destiny, fully promised himself a bright and smiling future to indemnify him for so many years of sorrow and suffering. Like most tender and imaginative persons, Pierre Simon was also a fatalist, and fully reckoned upon his right to expect in the society of his wife and child a double compensation for the severe reverses and privations he had been made to suffer. In direct opposition to that class of persons whom a long succession of calamities renders callous or indifferent, Pierre Simon relied on experiencing a happiness as great as had been his misfortunes; his wife and child were the indispensable, nay the sole desiderata of his earthly hopes, the centre of all his pictures of perfect felicity, which were to compensate for the *triste* passages of his early life; and, had it pleased Heaven to remove his offspring, their mother, tenderly beloved as she was, could no more have satisfied his aching heart, than the two young creatures bequeathed to his charge were able to replace the idolised parent they had lost in his warm affections. Whether this deserve to be considered weakness of mind, or an overexacting affection, we pretend not to declare; we merely wish to establish the fact of

its being so, inasmuch as the destructive and incessant grief occasioned by his irreparable loss exercised a most powerful influence over the future destiny of Maréchal Simon.

Adrienne and Dagobert had bestowed a respectful deference on the overwhelming grief of the bereaved husband, who, when he had given free vent to his grief, raised his fine, manly countenance, changed within the last few minutes to the colour of marble, drew his hand across his red and swollen eyes, rose from his chair, and, addressing Adrienne, said:

"Excuse me, mademoiselle, for thus indulging in your presence in a grief too mighty for my powers of endurance. With your permission, I will retire. I have many painful particulars to inquire from the faithful friend who witnessed the last moments of my wife; let me beg to be conducted to my poor girls — my bereaved and motherless children — " And again the choking sobs of the maréchal extinguished his further utterance.

"Unhappily," replied Mlle. de Cardoville, "although, but a short time since, we fully expected the arrival of your children, our hopes have been disappointed." Pierre Simon looked silently at Adrienne, as though he had either not heard or comprehended her reply. "But pray take courage," added the kind-hearted girl, "we must not yet despair."

"Despair!" repeated the maréchal, mechanically, looking with perturbed and anxious glances from Mlle. de Cardoville to Dagobert. "Gracious God! What fresh blow is in store for me? What should we not despair of?"

"Of seeing your daughters again, M. le Maréchal," said Adrienne; "for the presence and authority of their father will give a fresh force to our researches."

"Researches?" cried Pierre Simon. "Then my children are not here?"

"They are not," said Adrienne, making a violent effort

to terminate the miserable suspense under which the maréchal laboured. "I grieve to say they have been surreptitiously removed from the affectionate care of the worthy man who brought them hither from the very extremity of Russia, and placed in a convent."

"Villain," exclaimed Pierre Simon, advancing towards Dagobert, with flashing eyes and threatening mien, "dearly shall you answer to me for this!"

"Do not blame him," interposed Mlle. de Cardoville; "indeed — indeed, he merits not your displeasure."

"General," said Dagobert, in a firm, though dejected and submissive tone of voice, "I deserve your reproaches. I acted wrong to quit Paris (though compelled to do so by business, in which the dear children's interests were concerned), still I believed them as secure under my wife's care as my own; but, poor creature, her head was fairly turned by her confessor, who persuaded her the children would be better off in a convent than with us. She believed him, and permitted them to be removed to a place chosen by this same confessor. Now they declare at the convent that they know nothing of the young ladies. This is the whole truth of the matter. Do with me what you will, — I shall endure it patiently, and without a murmur."

"This is past belief!" cried Pierre Simon, pointing to Dagobert, with mingled contempt and indignation. "Whom shall I venture to trust since he has so basely deceived me?"

"Ah, M. le Maréchal," interposed Mlle. de Cardoville, "spare your angry reproaches, — believe not what he says; to my knowledge, he risked both life and honour in endeavouring to remove the children from the convent in which they were placed; nor is he the only person whose efforts have failed; for, even a magistrate, spite of the legal authority with which he was invested, failed to effect the deliverance of your children; for neither his firm and decided tone with the superior, nor

the most minute search through every part of the convent, have availed to discover them."

"But where is this convent?" exclaimed Maréchal Simon, assuming an air of proud defiance, while his pale and agitated countenance bespoke the determined purpose of his soul, "Where is it situated? Tell me, that I may hasten to demand my daughters, — they little know of what a parent is capable, whose children thus are stolen from him."

At the moment when Maréchal Simon, with his eyes fixed on the countenance of Dagobert, pronounced these words, Rodin, holding Rose and Blanche by the hand, appeared at the half open door. As the exclamation of the maréchal struck on his ear, he almost started with joy, while a gleam of fiendish pleasure illumined his sinister features, at finding Pierre Simon arrived at a period more opportune than he had ventured to hope for.

Mlle. de Cardoville was the first to perceive the presence of Rodin, and, hastening towards him, she exclaimed:

"Ah, I was not mistaken! Still and ever our providence — our good genius — our guardian angel!"

"My children," said Rodin to the sisters, while he pointed to Pierre Simon, "behold your father!"

"See, M. le Maréchal," cried Adrienne, rushing towards Rose and Blanche, — "see, Heaven restores you your children! Oh, what happiness!"

As Pierre Simon turned around, the sisters threw themselves upon his neck, and for several minutes no sound was heard but mingled sobs of joy, kisses, and affectionate expressions of delight.

"At least, come and enjoy the felicity you have effected," said Mlle. de Cardoville, drying her eyes, and turning towards Rodin, who, standing within the doorway and leaning against one side of it, appeared to contemplate the scene before him with the purest delight and sincerest sympathy.

Dagobert, at the sight of the children led in by Rodin, was so completely overcome by surprise, that he remained as though spellbound; but, at the words of Adrienne, the excess of his gratitude seemed almost to deprive him of his senses, for, suddenly throwing himself at the feet of Rodin, and clasping his hands as though in prayer, he stammered out:

"Thanks, thanks, — a thousand times thanks! You have given me more than life in thus restoring these children!"

"Ah, monsieur," said La Mayeux, stimulated by the universal enthusiasm, "may Heaven reward and bless you for what you have done!"

"My good friends," said Rodin, as though overpowered by the force of his emotions, "this is too much, — in truth, more than I am able to bear. Make my apologies, I pray of you, to M. le Maréchal, and tell him I am more than paid for my trifling service in being permitted to witness his happiness."

"Nay, nay," said Adrienne, "let me beseech you not to quit us till the maréchal is aware of all he owes you. Let him, at least, behold the man to whom we are all so greatly indebted."

"Stay, our universal friend and preserver!" cried Dagobert, striving, with all his energy, to detain Rodin.

"My dear young lady," said Rodin, addressing Adrienne, "you called me but now your Providence, — remember, then, that Providence thinks ever more of the good that remains to be done than of that already accomplished!" Then added he, in a tone of mingled benevolence and cunning, "Would it not be better for me to occupy myself immediately in endeavours to discover Prince Djalma? My task is still unfinished, and the moments are precious. I am thankful to say," continued he, gently freeing himself from the vigorous grasp of Dagobert, "that the events of this day have been as propitious as I could have desired. The Abbé d'Aigrigny

is unmasked; you, my dear young lady, are restored to liberty; my brave soldier here has recovered his valued cross; La Mayeux is assured of a friend and protectress; and M. le Maréchal is permitted to embrace his children. I have very small share in procuring all this, and my reward is a rich one. My heart glows, my conscience approves, and — adieu, my friends, adieu, for the present!"

So saying, Rodin, respectfully and affectionately saluting by a wave of his hand Adrienne, Dagobert, and La Mayeux, disappeared, first by a look directing their attention to Maréchal Simon, who, seated between his two daughters, and alternately caressing and weeping over them, appeared wholly unconscious of what was passing around him.

An hour after this scene Mlle. de Cardoville, La Mayeux, with Maréchal Simon, his daughters, and Dagobert, had quitted the house of Doctor Baleinier.

On terminating this episode, let us add two words of moral as to the position of lunatic asylums and convents.

We have said, and we repeat, that the law which now regulates the superintendence of lunatic asylums appears to us insufficient. Facts recently brought before the tribunals, and other facts of a most important character, which have been confided to us, seem plainly to prove this insufficiency.

No doubt but magistrates have full power to visit lunatic asylums, and this visit is even appointed; but we know from a sure source that the numerous and incessant occupations of the magistrates, whose power to discharge their duties is frequently very inadequate to the amount of those duties, render these inspections so rare that they are scarcely worthy of that appellation.

It appears to us that it would be most useful to create and direct inspections at least every fortnight,

and particularly devoted to the surveillance of lunatic asylums, consisting of a doctor and a magistrate, in order that their investigations should be submitted to a cross-examination.

No doubt justice is never wrong when sufficiently instructed; but there are so many formalities, so many difficulties, and especially when the unfortunate complainant has need to seek its aid, being as he is in a state of suspicion, isolation, and compulsory confinement, and has not out-of-doors one friend to take up his defence and appeal in his name to the constituted authorities!

Is it not, then, the duty of the civil power to anticipate these appeals by periodical visitations fitly appointed?

And what we say of lunatic asylums ought to apply, perhaps, even more strongly, to convents for females, to seminaries, and religious houses filled with large numbers.

Facts also very recent, very plain, and with which all France has rung, have unfortunately proved that violence, sequestrations, barbarous treatment, compulsion of female minors, illegal imprisonment accompanied by torture, were acts which, if not frequent, were at least possible in these religious houses.

It has required singular chances and horrid brutalities to make these detestable actions reach the knowledge of the public. How many other victims have been, and, perhaps, are still buried in these vast, silent mansions, where no profane look ever dares to penetrate, and which, from the immunities conceded to the clergy, escape the surveillance of the civil power?

Is it not deplorable that these houses are not subjected also to periodical visitations, consisting, if it be desired, of a chaplain, a magistrate, or some other person appointed by the municipal authority?

If nothing unlawful is perpetrated, and only what is

humane and charitable allowed in these establishments, which have all the character, and, consequently, all the responsibility of public establishments, why is there this revolt, this fierce indignation of the priest-party, when what they call their franchises are discussed?

There is something beyond the laws deliberated and promulgated at Rome: It is the law of France, the law common to all, which gives protection to all, and which in its turn imposes on all — respect and obedience.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INDIAN IN PARIS.

It was three days since Mlle. de Cardoville had quitted Doctor Baleinier's.

The following scene took place in a small house in the Rue Blanche, where Djalma had been conducted in the name of an unknown protector.

The reader will picture a pretty circular apartment, hung with Indian stuff of pearl-gray ground with purple devices, relieved by threads of gold; the ceiling towards the centre was hidden beneath similar draperies, fastened and drawn together by a thick silken cord; at each end of this cord, which dropped unequally, was suspended, in the form of an acorn, a small Indian lamp of gold filigree exquisitely fashioned.

By one of those ingenious combinations so common in barbarous countries, these lamps served also for perfume-burners; small plates of crystal, blue in colour, and chased down each side with arabesque ornaments, and lighted by a lamp within, shone with an azure so limpid that these golden lamps appeared like constellations of transparent sapphires; light clouds of whitish vapour rose from time to time about the two lamps, and filled the vacant space with balmy odour.

Daylight only entered this salon (it was about two o'clock in the afternoon) by passing through a small conservatory, which was visible through a window of plate glass, which formed the door also, and which was constructed to disappear in the thickness of the wall by

sliding it along a groove made in the floor. A Chinese blind could be lowered at pleasure, and conceal or replace this glass.

Some dwarf palm-trees, musas, and other Indian vegetables, with thick leaves and of a green colour almost metallic, were arranged in clumps in this conservatory, and served as perspective and relief to two large chequered masses of exotic flowers, separated by a small path paved with Japanese blue and yellow tiles, which terminated at the foot of the plate glass door.

The light, already much obstructed by the network of leaves through which it struggled, had a hue of singular softness combined with the blue light of the perfumed lamps and the silvery brightness of the blazing hearth of a tall fireplace of Oriental porphyry.

In this somewhat obscure apartment, strongly impregnated with sweet odours mingled with aromatic perfume of Persian tobacco, a man with brown and hanging locks, wearing a long gown of dark green fastened around his loins with a chequered girdle, was kneeling on a splendid Turkey carpet, carefully refreshing the fire in the golden furnace of a hooka, the flexible and long pipe of which, after having rolled its coils on the carpet like a scarlet serpent with silver scales, terminated between the round and slender fingers of Djalma, who was indolently extended on a divan.

The young prince had his head uncovered, his jet-black, hair with its bluish shades parted down his forehead, fell undulating and soft around his face and neck of antique beauty, and of a warm, transparent hue, like amber or topaz. Leaning on a cushion he reposed his chin on the palm of his right hand, whilst the wide sleeve of his tunic, falling back nearly to the bend of the elbow, showed on his arm, as round as a woman's, the mysterious emblems formerly tattooed in India by the needle of the Strangler.

The son of Kadja-Sing held in his left hand the amber

mouthpiece of his pipe. His tunic of magnificent white cashmere, of which the border was embroidered with a thousand colours, reached to his knees, and was confined around his slim and well-formed waist by the large folds of an orange shawl. The well-turned and symmetrical calf of one of the legs of this Asiatic Antinous, half revealed by a fold of his tunic, was clad in a sort of gaiter, fitting closely, made of crimson velvet embroidered in silver, and hollowed out over the instep, where it met a small slipper of white morocco with a red heel.

Djalma's countenance, at once soft and masculine, expressed that melancholy and contemplative calm habitual to Indians and Arabs, — those happy and privileged individuals, who by a rare mixture unite the meditative indolence of the dreamer with the powerful energy of the man of action, and sometimes delicate, nervous, and as easily excited as women, are at other times as resolute, fierce, and sanguinary as bandits.

And this half feminine comparison applied to the nature of Arabs and Indians, when they are not roused by the excitement of battle or the scent of carnage, may be almost applied to them physically; for if, like high-bred women, they have small heads, hands, and feet, delicate joints, and figures as slender as they are supple, this delicate envelope always covers muscles of steel, and a spring and vigour purely virile.

Djalma's long eyes, like black diamonds set in bluish mother-of-pearl, wandered mechanically from the exotic flowers to the ceiling, and then from time to time he applied the amber of his hooka to his lips; then, after a short inspiration, half opening his red lips strongly defined on the dazzling enamel of his teeth, he breathed forth a small spiral wreath of smoke, freshly aromatised by the rose-water through which it had been drawn.

"Shall I put more tobacco in the hooka?" asked the man who was kneeling on the ground, turning his face

towards Djalma, and displaying the sharp and sinister features of Faringhea the Strangler.

The young prince remained mute; either from his Oriental contempt for certain races he disdained to reply to the métis, or absorbed in his reveries he did not hear him.

The Strangler was silent and crouched on the carpet; there with his legs crossed, his elbows on his knees, his chin on his two hands, and his eyes steadfastly fixed on Djalma, he awaited the reply or the orders of him whose sire was called the Father of the Generous.

How could Faringhea, the sanguinary disciple of Bohwanie, the deity of murder, have accepted or sought for an office so menial? How could this man, whose mind was of no common order, whose persuasive eloquence and determined energy had obtained so many valuable proselytes for the service of the "good work," have brought himself to fulfil the inferior situation he now held? Or what ground was there for expecting that, profiting by the blind confidence of the young prince, the individual in question would respect the life of the son of Kadja-Sing? And, last of all, how would he be enabled to incur the risk of continually encountering Rodin, to whom he was so well known under circumstances by no means advantageous? The conclusion of our history will account for all these seeming contradictions and impossibilities. All that we shall now say on the subject is, that, after a long conversation with Rodin on the preceding evening, the Strangler had departed with serious air and downcast eyes from the presence of his companion.

After a long silence, during which Djalma appeared solely occupied in observing the thin vapour of smoke as it mounted from his hooka and spread itself in the air, without troubling himself to regard Faringhea, he addressed him in that style, at once concise and hyperbolical, so peculiar to the nations of the East, saying:

"The hour is past, — he of the kind heart comes not. He will come yet. His word is his word."

"You have spoken well, my lord," answered Faringhea, in an approving tone; "when the good man came three days ago to visit you in this house, whither some wretches for their own evil purposes had caused you to be conveyed in a deep slumber produced by vile drugs (to which state I, your faithful and devoted follower, had likewise been reduced), he said to you, 'The unknown friend who sent to fetch you from the Château de Cardoville sends me to you, prince. Rely on me, — follow me without fear; a dwelling worthy of your rank and merits is provided for you.' Then he said, 'Promise me not to quit this house until you see me again; your safety requires it. In three days' time I will return; you will then be at liberty to act as you please.' You agreed to do as he wished you, my lord, and, during the last three days, you have not once left this house."

"Still, I wait the coming of the old man with much impatience," replied Djalma, "for this solitude wearies and oppresses me; there must be so many fine and beautiful things to see in Paris."

Djalma ceased speaking, and a second time relapsed into a deep reverie.

After several minutes passed thus, the son of Kadja-Sing suddenly exclaimed, in a tone at once haughty, impatient, and listless:

"Let me hear more words from you!"

"Of what shall I discourse to my lord?"

"Of what you will," answered Djalma, with contemptuous indifference, and fixing his half closed eyes on the ceiling. "I am pursued incessantly by one thought, — one idea. I wish to be relieved of it. Speak, then, that my mind may receive fresh images."

Faringhea cast a scrutinising glance on the features of the young Indian, which were suffusedwith a faint red.

"My lord," said the métis, "I guess your thought. Your torment is revealed to my mental vision."

Djalma shook his head without looking at the Strangler, who resumed:

"My lord thinks of the lovely women of Paris."

"Silence, slave!" exclaimed Djalma, turning abruptly on his sofa, as though some painful wound had been touched to the quick.

Faringhea said no more.

At the end of a few moments Djalma, throwing from him the pipe of his hooka, and concealing his eyes with his hands, exclaimed:

"Your words are preferable to your silence. Accursed be my thoughts, and equally accursed the inclination which calls up such fancies!"

"And why should my lord seek to fly his thoughts? You are now nineteen years of age. Your youth has been passed either in war or in prison; and, until the present hour, you have remained as unconscious of the power of love as our fellow traveller, the young Christian priest Gabriel."

Although Faringhea had in no way departed from his usual respectful and deferential tone, yet the prince felt a slight irony pervade the words of the métis, more particularly when he alluded to his ignorance of the tender passion.

Djalma replied, in a tone at once haughty and severe:

"I would not pass for a mere barbarian among the civilised people with whom I now am; and, therefore, I rejoice that my heart is as virgin snow on which no impression has yet been made."

"My lord speaks riddles to his servant."

"I would win and woo a woman pure and innocent as was my mother when my father received her to his arms, and here to obtain one like her we must be chaste and pure ourselves."

At this idea Faringhea could not conceal a sardonic smile.

"And wherefore dost thou laugh, slave?" demanded the young prince, imperiously.

"I laughed, my prince, because among civilised nations nothing would excite more ridicule than the idea of a person marrying with such primitive notions of virgin innocence."

"Thou liest, slave! He would be ridiculed only should he espouse a wife less pure than himself."

"The only difference in such a case would be that, instead of mere ridicule, he would be tormented to madness by the pitiless raillery of all around him."

"'Tis false! 'tis false! or, if true, where learnedst thou this?"

"I have seen the women of this country, both in the Isle of France and at Pondicherry, my lord. Besides which I learned much during our voyage from a young French officer with whom I conversed almost as much as yourself did with the Christian priest Gabriel."

"Then it would seem that, like our sultans in their harems, the people of the civilised world exact from their females a purity they do not themselves possess?"

"In general, those who have the least in their own characters are most scrupulous in requiring it from their wives."

"To demand that which is not equally given is the conduct of a master to a slave. And how can such sentiments influence a free and generous nation?"

"My lord forgets that the law-maker is often the law-breaker, and that might is right; just the same as with us, my lord, where the stronger party takes what he desires and leaves the weaker to be satisfied with what they can obtain."

"And what do the females in this case?"

"My lord, they consider they have well performed their duty when they seek to prevent their husbands

from rendering themselves ridiculous by any absurd protestations of immaculate innocence and virtue before their marriage."

"And for the wife who deceives — whe betrays her husband's honour," said Djalma, springing suddenly up, and fixing on Faringhea a fierce glance, while his eyes glittered with fury, "how treat they such? Do they slay them?"

"Even so, my lord; as with us, a woman caught in crime washes it out in blood."

"Since, then, these civilised people are equally despotic with ourselves, why do they not shut up their wives as we do ours to compel their fidelity?"

"Because, my lord, they are as civilised as barbarous, and as barbarous as civilised."

"There is much justice in your words, if they be true," replied Djalma, with a pensive air. Then he added with considerable excitement, and adopting in a certain degree the figurative and mystical language of his country:

"In truth, slave, what thou sayest afflicts me greatly; for as two drops of heavenly dew mixing together in the calyx of a flower, so are two hearts mingling in a holy, chaste, and virgin love; like unto two rays of fire, uniting into one bright and imperishable flame, are those glowing joys, those unfading delights, which wait upon two tender lovers joined in marriage bond."

When Djalma spoke of the modest joys of the soul with inexpressible charm, whilst he depicted a less ideal happiness, he trembled perceptibly, his nostrils expanded, the pale gold hue of his complexion became flushed, and the young prince fell back in deep reflection.

Faringhea, having remarked this latter emotion, resumed:

"And if, like the proud and bright king-bird[1] of our

[1] A variety of the bird of paradise, very peculiar in its habits and instincts.

country, the sultan of our woods, you should prefer numerous and varied pleasures to sole and solitary loves, — young, handsome, rich as you are, monseigneur, if you seek for seductive Parisian females, you know, those lovely phantoms of your dreams, those charming houris of your nights, if you cast on them looks that resemble a defiance, suppliant as a prayer or burning as a desire, do you not think that every half downcast eye will inflame at your glances of fire? Then there will not be the monotonous delights of a single love, — the heaviest chain in our existence. No, there will be the thousand delights of the harem, but that harem peopled with free and proud women whom happy love will render your slaves. Pure and self-restrained hitherto, you will not now commit excess. Then, believe me, ardent and magnificent, it is you, son of our land, who will become the love, the pride, the idolatry of these women; and these women, the most attractive in the world, will soon have eyes, and looks, and passion, but for you!"

Djalma had listened to Faringhea with anxious silence. The expression of the young Indian's features had completely altered; they no longer displayed the melancholy and dreamy youth, invoking the holy memory of his mother, and finding only in the dew of heaven, in the calyx of flowers, images sufficiently pure to paint the chastity, the love he dreamed of; it was not even the young man blushing with modest ardour at the thoughts of the delights of a legitimate union. No, no, the incitements of Faringhea had suddenly lighted up a subterranean fire. The burning countenance of Djalma, his eyes by turns sparkling and closed, the deep and echoing aspiration of his chest, betokened the fire in his blood and the excitement of his passions, the more energetic as they had been until then utterly repressed.

In a moment darting from the divan, active, vigorous, and light as a young tiger, Djalma seized Faringhea by the throat, exclaiming:

"Your words burn like poison!"

"Monseigneur," said Faringhea, without offering the slightest resistance, "your slave is your slave."

This submission disarmed the prince.

"My life belongs to you," said the métis.

"'Tis mine belongs to thee, slave!" exclaimed Djalma, repulsing him. "This moment I was hanging at thy lips, swallowing thy daring and dangerous lies."

"Lies, monseigneur! Only do you appear among these women, and their looks will confirm my words."

"These women love me! Me, who have only lived hitherto in war and in the forests?"

"When they remember that, so young, you have already had your bloody chases of men and tigers, they will adore you, monseigneur."

"Thou liest!"

"I tell you, monseigneur, when they see your hand, which, as delicate as their own, has yet been so often dipped in the blood of your enemies, they will kiss it; and kiss it again when they think that in our forests with your loaded carbine and poniard between your teeth, you have smiled at the roars of the lion and the panther, for whom you lay in wait."

"But I am a savage — a barbarian —"

"And, therefore, they will be at your feet; they will seem at once frightened and charmed when they reflect on all the violence, all the fury, all the passion of jealousy, excitement, and love, to which a man of your blood, your youth, and your ardour will give way. To-day, soft and tender; to-morrow, gloomy and fierce; next day, ardent and impassioned; such will you be, such should you be, to attract them. Yes, yes; let a cry of rage escape between two kisses, let a dagger gleam between two caresses, let them but be frightened, exhausted, palpitating between love and fear, and you will be to them, not a man but a god!"

"Dost think so?" said Djalma, carried away, in

spite of himself, by the wild eloquence of the Strangler.

"You know — you feel that I speak the truth," exclaimed Faringhea, extending his arms towards Djalma.

"Yes, indeed," replied Djalma, with eye of flame and expanded nostrils, as he paced up and down the apartment, as it were, by wild leaps and bounds, "I do not know if I am in my senses, or if I am drunk, but it seems as though you had spoken truly; yes, I feel it, I shall be loved with madness, with fury, because I shall love with madness and fury. They will tremble with pleasure and fear, because I myself, whilst I think of it, tremble with happiness and dread. Slave, thou sayest truly; and this love will be something overwhelming and terrific."

As Djalma spoke he was resplendent in his display of excited sense. It was a rare sight, — a man having reached, pure and self-restrained, an age when the instincts of love, which the Almighty has so admirably engrafted on his creatures, begin to develop themselves in their all-powerful energy, instincts which repressed, falsified, or perverted, may destroy the reason, or turn it to unbridled dissipation or horrid crimes, but which directed towards a great and noble passion may and ought, by their very violence, to raise a man through devotion and tenderness to the very extreme limits of the ideal.

"Ah, this woman, this woman, before whom I shall tremble, and who will tremble before me! Where is she?" exclaimed Djalma, in increased excitement. "Shall I ever, ever find her?"

"One is a difficulty, monseigneur," said Faringhea, with sardonic coolness. "He who seeks for one woman rarely finds her in this land; but he who seeks women will be embarrassed to make his choice."

At the moment when the métis made this important

reply to Djalma there was seen to stop at the small garden gate of this house, a door which opened upon a deserted corner, a chariot of extreme elegance, with blue body on a white carriage, picked out with blue also. This chariot was drawn by two splendid blood bay horses with black manes; the mountings of the harness were silver, as were the buttons of the servants, who wore a blue livery with white collars. On the hammer-cloth, of blue also, and trimmed with white fringe, as well as on the panels of the doors, were the coat-of-arms in a lozenge, without crest or coronet, as is usual on the carriages of single ladies.

There were two females in this chariot, Mlle. de Cardoville and Florine.

CHAPTER X.

THE SLEEPING APARTMENT.

In order to explain the arrival of Mlle. de Cardoville at the garden door of the house occupied by Djalma, it is necessary to cast a retrospective glance over certain previous events.

Mlle. de Cardoville, on quitting Doctor Baleinier's house, had established herself in her abode in the Rue d'Anjou. For several of the last months of her residence with her aunt, Adrienne had been secretly fitting up and furnishing this house, the splendour and elegance of which had been materially increased by all the marvels of taste and art from the pavilion of the Hôtel de Saint-Dizier.

The world thought it very extraordinary that a young lady of the age and rank of Mlle. de Cardoville should have determined on living alone, free, and keeping house like a bachelor long since of age, a young widow, or an emancipated minor.

The world appeared to be ignorant that Mlle. de Cardoville possessed what men who have reached their majority, or a majority twice told, do not always possess, — a firm and decided character, a lofty imagination, a generous heart, and very right and just common sense.

Judging that she should require for the direction of her servants and the superintendence of her household persons of fidelity, Adrienne had written to the land-steward of the Cardoville estate and his wife, old servants of the family, to come instantly to Paris; intending M.

Dupont to fulfil all the functions of a steward, and his wife, those of housekeeper. An old friend of Mlle. de Cardoville's father, the Comte de Montbron, a remarkably high-spirited old gentleman and formerly a leader in the fashionable world, and always a great connoisseur in matters of taste, had advised Adrienne to play the princess and have a squire; introducing to her, as fitted for that office, a man very well educated and past the prime of life, who, being passionately fond of horses, after having ruined himself in England, at Newmarket, Epsom, and Tattersall's, had been completely reduced, as frequently happens to gentlemen in that country, to drive a four-horse coach, finding in that occupation a means of getting an honest living, and also of gratifying his passion for horses. Such was M. de Bonneville, the protégé of the Comte de Montbron. His age and knowledge of the world were such as to give him authority to attend Mlle. de Cardoville on horseback; he could, better than any one, superintend her stables and the keeping up of her carriages. Consequently he accepted the employment with gratitude; and, thanks to his enlightened zeal, the turnout of Mlle. Cardoville rivalled the most elegant in Paris.

Hebe, Georgette, and Florine were all again in attendance on their young lady.

The last had been in the service of the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, in order to keep up her character of spy to the profit of the superior of the convent of Ste. Marie; but when the Rennepont affair took the new turn given to it by Rodin, it was resolved that Florine, if it could be so contrived, should return to her old service with Mlle. de Cardoville, this post of confidence placing this miserable girl in a position to render important and dark services to those who held her fate in their hands, and constrained her to this sort of infamous treachery.

Unfortunately, everything had tended to favour this machination.

We know that Florine, in an interview with La Mayeux a few days after Mlle. de Cardoville had been confined at Doctor Baleinier's, yielding to a feeling of remorse, had given the little workwoman very useful advice in the interests of Adrienne, by desiring that Agricola should not hand over to Madame de St. Dizier the papers he had found in the secret panel in the pavilion, and to trust them to no one but Mlle. de Cardoville herself, who, told of this subsequently by La Mayeux, felt her confidence in and interest for Florine redoubled by this fact, and took her back into her service with almost gratitude, employing her in an affair that was almost confidential, namely, the superintendence of the arrangements of the house engaged for Djalma's dwelling.

As to La Mayeux, yielding to the solicitations of Mlle. de Cardoville, and finding that she could no longer be useful to Dagobert's wife, of whom we shall speak by and by, she had consented to remain in the hôtel of the Rue d'Anjou with Adrienne, who, with that sound sagacity which marked her character, had entrusted to the little sempstress, who also served her as a secretary, the department of assistance and almsgiving.

Mlle. de Cardoville had at first thought of keeping La Mayeux with her simply as her friend, desirous of thus honouring and exalting her honesty in labour, resignation in sorrow, and intelligence in poverty; but, knowing the natural dignity of the young girl, she feared, and with reason, that, in spite of the extreme delicacy with which her sisterly hospitality might be offered to La Mayeux, she would only perceive in it charity in disguise. Adrienne therefore preferred, whilst she treated her quite as a friend, to give her a confidential occupation. In this way the nice sensibility of the sempstress was not affected, since she earned her livelihood by fulfilling duties which were most gratifying to her charitable and sympathising nature.

In truth, no one was better qualified than La Mayeux to accept the holy mission confided to her by Adrienne; her severe experience of misfortune, the excellence of her pure soul, the elevation of her mind, her vast activity, her penetration into the painful secrets of the unfortunate and suffering, and her intimate knowledge of the poor and laborious classes, all bespoke with what tact and good sense the excellent creature would second the generous intentions of Mlle. de Cardoville.

We will now allude to several circumstances which had on this day preceded Mlle. de Cardoville's arrival at the garden door of the house in the Rue Blanche.

Although it was ten o'clock in the morning, the shutters of Adrienne's sleeping-room, hermetically closed, did not allow a ray of daylight to penetrate into the apartment, which was only lighted by a spherical lamp of Oriental alabaster, suspended from the ceiling by three long silver chains.

The chamber, which had a dome, was arranged like a tent in eight divisions. From the top to the ground it was hung with white silk, covered with long white muslin draperies, puffed out and kept along the sides of the wall by bands, fastened at certain intervals by large ivory *paterœ*.

Two doors, also of ivory, elaborately inlaid with mother-of-pearl, led, the one to the bath and the other to the toilet-room, — a sort of small temple raised to the worship of Beauty, and furnished as it had been in the pavilion of the Hôtel Saint-Dizier.

Two other divisions of the room were occupied by windows, completely concealed by draperies. In front of the bed there was (enclosing dog-irons of carved and massive silver) a Pendelic marble chimneypiece, a real snow of crystal, on which were carved two exquisite caryatides, and a frieze of birds and flowers. Above this frieze, and cut transparently in the marble, with

marvellous delicacy, was a sort of basket, of oval shape and elegant design, which supplied the place of the mantelpiece, and was ornamented with a mass of red camelias, whose leaves of a brilliant green, and flowers of light carmine hue, were the only colours which would have justly harmonised with the virgin whiteness of this charming retreat.

Then, half environed by the waves of white muslin, which fell from the dome like light clouds, was seen the very low bed, with its feet of ivory richly sculptured, and resting on the ermine carpet which decked the floor. Except a plinth, also of ivory, beautifully carved, and decorated with mother-of-pearl, the bed was entirely lined with white satin, wadded and worked like a vast scent-bag.

The cambric curtains trimmed with Valenciennes lace, being a little disturbed, revealed the end of a mattress covered with white silk, and the corner of a light watered silk quilt; and in the apartment an equal and cold regulated temperature was kept up like that of a fine spring day.

By a singular scruple, arising out of the same sentiment as that which had made Adrienne inscribe on a gem of goldsmith's work the name of the author instead of that of the seller, she had chosen that all these objects, which were so sumptuous and refined, should be made by artisans chosen from amongst the most intelligent, most industrious, and most honest of their class, to whom she had supplied the raw material, so that they could add to the price of their handiwork the amount of profit which the dealers in speculating on their labours would have added; and this increase of gain, which was very considerable, had afforded much happiness and ease to a hundred necessitous families, who, thus blessing Adrienne's munificence, gave her, as she said, the right to enjoy her luxury as an action that was right and good.

Nothing could be more fresh, more charming to see, than the interior of this sleeping-chamber.

Mlle. de Cardoville had just awakened, and was reposing in the midst of these waves of muslin, lace, cambric, and white silk, in an attitude full of softness and grace. During the night she never wore any covering on her splendid golden hair (a certain mode by which to preserve it in all its beauties, according to the Greeks). At night her women arranged the long curls of her silky locks in sundry flat tresses, with which she formed two long and thick bandeaux, which, falling low enough, almost entirely concealed her small ear, of which only the rosy tip was visible, and then were intermingled with the large knot twisted up at the back of her head.

This head-dress, borrowed from the antique Greek, suited the pure and delicate features of Mlle. de Cardoville admirably, and seemed to make her look so youthful, that, instead of being eighteen years old, she seemed hardly fifteen. Her hair thus gathered closely about her temples lost its light and brilliant hue, and would have appeared almost brown had it not been for the golden hues which played here and there in the undulation of her tresses.

Plunged in a matutinal torpor, whose warm drowsiness is so propitious to soft reveries, Adrienne was reclining on her pillow, her head somewhat bent, which heightened the ideal contour of her naked neck and shoulders; her smiling lips, moist and rosy, were, like her cheeks, as cool as if she had just bathed them in frozen water; her snowy lids half concealed her large dark brown and soft eyes, which now gazed languidly on vacancy and now rested complacently on the red flowers and green leaves of the basket of camelias.

Who can depict the unutterable serenity of Adrienne's awaking, — the awaking of a soul so lovely and chaste, in a body so chaste and lovely, — the awaking of a heart as pure as the fresh and balmy breath of youth

which undulated in her virgin bosom, as virgin white as "unsunned snows?"

The mingled thoughts, which, since her waking, seemed gently to agitate Adrienne, absorbed her more and more. Her head was bent over her bosom, and her beautiful arms hung down upon the couch, whilst her features, without becoming saddened, yet assumed an expression of touching melancholy.

Her most anxious desire was accomplished, — she was about to live independent and alone; but her affectionate, delicate, expansive, and wonderfully perfect nature perceived that God had not gifted her with all these treasures that they should be concealed in a cold and selfish solitude! She felt all that love could inspire of the great and the beautiful, both to herself and to him who should be worthy of her.

Full of reliance in the strength and nobility of her character, proud of the example which she desired to set to other women, knowing that all eyes were fixed on her with envy, she only felt perhaps too much self-confidence; and, far from having any distrust that she should make an ill or improper choice, she only feared that she should not find a fit selection to choose from, so purified was her taste. If, moreover, she should meet with her ideal, she had a mode of scrutiny so strange and yet so just, so extraordinary and yet so well-ordered as to the independence and dignity which (in her opinion) women ought to maintain with respect to man, that, inexorably determined to make no concession on that point, she asked herself if the man of her choice would ever accept the conditions (until then unheard of) which she should impose upon him.

Recalling to her memory the possible pretenders whom, up to this period, she had met in the world, she recollected the picture, so unfortunately correct, which Rodin had traced with caustic severity, when talking of men who might offer. She remembered,

too, and not without a certain degree of pride, the encouragement which that artful man had given her, not in flattering her, but in urging her to pursue the accomplishment of a design that was really so great, generous, and admirable.

The current or the caprice of Adrienne's thoughts soon led her to think of Djalma.

Whilst she congratulated herself for fulfilling towards this relative of royal blood the duties of a royal hospitality, the young girl was far from making the young prince the hero of her future destiny.

And she still further argued, and not without reason, that this half savage, being possessed of passions which, if not absolutely unconquerable, were as yet unconquered, must inevitably be doomed to pass through many severe ordeals, and to undergo the most complete transformation, as regarded his tastes, views, pursuits, and ideas. Now, as Mlle. de Cardoville was by no means of a masculine nature, neither did she possess the very smallest liking for notoriety or exercising sway, she felt no inclination to take upon herself the civilisation of the young Indian; therefore, in spite of the interest she took in him, or, rather, from that very interest, she had firmly resolved not to make herself known to him till two or three months should have elapsed; and still further determined, even if chance should make him acquainted with their relationship, not to receive him at her own house. Her wish was, if not to try him, at least, to leave him free master of his actions and inclinations, that he might take his own unfettered bias, whether for good or evil. Still unwilling to abandon him, all defenceless as he was, to the perils of a Parisian life, she had taken the Comte de Montbron into her confidence, and besought of him to introduce Prince Djalma into the best society of Paris, and to afford him the benefit of the count's personal experience and valuable advice in all matters relative to a favourable début in the gay world.

M. de Montbron had lent a ready acquiescence to the request of Mlle. de Cardoville, feeling, as he said, the greatest possible pleasure in presenting his foreign novice to the first company Paris contained, and to put him in competition with the most polished *élégants* of the day, as a candidate for the smiles and favour of the Parisian belles; offering to bet to any amount on the success of his wild and uncivilised protégé.

"For my own part, my dear count," said Mlle. de Cardoville, "my resolution is not to be shaken. You have yourself told me of the effect Prince Djalma's appearance in the fashionable world will produce. An Indian of nineteen years, possessed of surpassing beauty, proud and unbroken as the lion of the forest, — he will be, you say, as new as extraordinary; and, doubtless, will quickly be marked down as worthy the pursuit of our civilised coquettes, who will seek to attract his notice and engage his attention with a perseverance and spirit which make me fear for our young friend's chance of escape from their wiles. Now, seriously, my dear count, I feel not the slightest inclination to enter the lists with the many lovely females who will unhesitatingly throw themselves within reach of the claws of your young barbarian, in whom I take a deep interest; in the first place, because he is my relative; in the second, because he is young, brave, and handsome; and, thirdly and principally, because he is not disfigured by wearing our horrible European costume. These claims on my regard are not, however, sufficiently powerful to induce me to change my mind for the present; added to which, the good old philosopher, my recently acquired friend, has given me some very excellent advice concerning this young Indian, which has even been approved and confirmed by you, my dear count, who, certainly, are not the least bit of a philosopher, which is, for some time only to receive visitors, and not to accept of any invitations; by which means I shall effectually avoid the

awkwardness of meeting my royal relative, and, at the same time, enable me carefully to select even my most indifferent guests; for, as my establishment is well appointed, and my position in society quite original, the curious of both sexes will be but too happy to be admitted to a dwelling where they flatter themselves so many scandalous little facts may be gleaned, touching its eccentric mistress and her equally singular tastes and habits, — from all of which I promise myself infinite amusement."

And when M. de Montbron inquired whether the poor, young, royal tiger were doomed to be banished for a long period from her, Adrienne replied:

"As nearly all the persons to whom you will have introduced him are among my visiting acquaintances, I shall thus be enabled, in a manner most amusing to myself, to hear the various opinions entertained respecting my royal cousin. If certain individuals of your sex speak highly of him, while some among my own find infinite fault with him, I shall have great hopes of his being all I desire to find him. In a word, the opinion I shall arrive at by separating the true from the false (and you may trust to my sagacity to be enabled to do so), will prolong or abridge what you are pleased to call the exile of my royal protégé."

Such were the positive intentions of Mlle. de Cardoville up to the very morning in which, in company with Florine, she repaired to the house inhabited by him. In fact, she had firmly resolved not to make herself known to him before the expiration of the next two or three months.

After having, on the morning we have been describing, long pondered over the probabilities and chances of finding what her heart desired, Adrienne fell into a deep and fresh train of thought.

Redolent with all the charms of youthful beauty, the

fascinating being we are portraying heaved a gentle sigh, as though struck by some new and mournful idea, threw her white arms languidly over her head, and, turning her cheek on her pillow, lay for several minutes as though entranced, absorbed, in the vastness of her thoughts. Thus extended, motionless, beneath the delicate coverings which enfolded her graceful form, she might have been taken for some admirable work of sculpture, half revealed beneath a bed of snow.

All at once Adrienne started up, passed her hand lightly over her forehead, and rang for the attendance of her women. As the silver sounds issued from the bell the two doors of ivory gently opened, and Georgette appeared at the threshold of the dressing-room, while Lutine, the beautiful little black and tan spaniel, with its golden collar, sprung forward, and, with loud and glad barkings, welcomed the waking of its mistress. On the threshold of the bath-chamber stood Hebe.

At the end of this apartment, lighted only from the top, and covered over with a carpet of green morocco chequered with golden wreaths, stood a large crystal bath formed like a lengthened shell. The only joinings in this masterpiece of elegance were concealed beneath the graceful twinings of the wreaths of silver flowers springing upwards from the pedestal of the bath, also formed of the most exquisitely carved silver, and representing children sporting with dolphins amid branches of natural coral and azure shells.

Nothing could have produced a more smiling, light, and tasteful appearance than this mixture of bright scarlet with the sea-shells, contrasting so chastely with the dead-silver ground. The sweet balsamic odours which arose from the clear, warm, and perfumed element, already prepared in the crystal cone, diffused themselves throughout the room, and entered the sleeping apartment like a thin, vapoury dew.

As Adrienne observed Hebe in her pretty and becom-

ing costume, standing with a long white wrapper thrown across her round and dimpled arm, she said:

"Where is Florine, my good girl?"

"She has been down-stairs these two hours, madame. She was sent for upon some very important and pressing business."

"Do you know who sent for her?"

"The young person you employ as your secretary, madame. She went out very early this morning, and, immediately upon her return, asked to see Florine, who immediately went to her, and has not since returned."

"No doubt this absence is relative to some important affair my amiable almoner has in hand," said Adrienne, smiling with pleasure at the thoughts of all the good she should be enabled to effect through the medium of La Mayeux. She then beckoned Hebe to approach the bed.

About two hours afterwards, Adrienne, dressed with her usual taste and elegance, dismissed her women, and requested to see La Mayeux, whom she always treated with marked deference, and always received alone.

The young sempstress entered, pale, agitated, and trembling, saying, in a voice unsteady from powerful emotion:

"Ah, mademoiselle, my presentiments were but too well founded. You are betrayed."

"Of what presentiments are you speaking, my dear girl, and who is betraying me?"

"M. Rodin!" replied La Mayeux.

CHAPTER XI.

DOUBTS.

When Mlle. de Cardoville heard the accusation made by La Mayeux against Rodin, she looked at the young girl with renewed astonishment.

Before we continue this scene, let us say that La Mayeux had thrown off her old miserable garments, and was dressed in black, with as much simplicity as good taste. This colour of sorrow seemed to announce her renunciation of all human vanities, the eternal mourning of her heart, and the austere duties which her devotion to the misfortunes of others imposed upon her. With this black gown, La Mayeux wore a large falling collar, as white and neat as her little gauze cap with gray ribands, which, exposing her two bands of beautiful brown hair, surrounded her pale face, with its soft blue eyes. Her long and meagre hands, protected from the cold by gloves, were not as they had been, mottled and violet-coloured, but of a whiteness almost transparent.

The agitated features of La Mayeux expressed extreme disquietude, and Mlle. de Cardoville, excessively surprised, exclaimed:

"What do you say?"

"Mademoiselle, M. Rodin is betraying you!"

"He! Impossible —"

"Ah, mademoiselle, my presentiments did not deceive me."

"Your presentiments?"

"The first time I was in M. Rodin's presence I was,

in spite of myself, overcome with dread. My heart was pained to the core, and I was frightened for you, mademoiselle."

"For me!" said Adrienne; "and why not for yourself, my dear friend?"

"I do not know, mademoiselle; but such was my first sensation. And this alarm was so invincible that, in spite of the benevolence which M. Rodin evinced for my sister, he still inspired me with fear."

"That is very strange. No one understands better than I do the almost irresistible influence of sympathies and aversions; but in this instance — but —" added Adrienne, after a moment's consideration, "no matter. Tell me how these suspicions have been converted into certainty to-day?"

"Yesterday I went to my sister, Céphyse, with the succour which M. Rodin had given me for her in the name of a charitable person. I did not find Céphyse in the house of the friend who had sheltered her, and I requested the portress of the house to tell my sister that I would go again this morning. I did so, — but I must ask your pardon, mademoiselle, for some necessary details —"

"Speak — speak, my friend."

"The young girl who has received my sister at her lodgings," continued poor La Mayeux, very much embarrassed, casting down her eyes, and blushing deeply, "does not lead the most correct life in the world. An individual whom she has joined in several parties of pleasure, called M. Dumoulin, had told her M. Rodin's real name, who occupied a small apartment in the same house, where he gave his name as M. Charlemagne."

"He told us as much at M. Baleinier's; and yesterday, again, referring to the circumstance, he explained to me the necessity he was under, for certain reasons, of having this retired lodging in this remote quarter, — reasons which were most satisfactory to me."

"Well, then, yesterday M. Rodin had a visit there from M. the Abbé d'Aigrigny."

"The Abbé d'Aigrigny!" cried Mlle. de Cardoville.

"Yes, mademoiselle; and he remained for two hours shut up with M. Rodin."

"My dear girl, they must have deceived you."

"This is what they told me, mademoiselle. The Abbé d'Aigrigny had called on the previous evening to see M. Rodin, and not finding him, left his name with the portress, written on paper, as well as these words, 'I shall call again in two hours.' The young girl I have named to you, mademoiselle, saw this paper; and as everything connected with M. Rodin seems very mysterious, she had the curiosity to watch for M. the Abbé d'Aigrigny, in the porter's lodge, in order to see him, and two hours afterwards he returned, and found M. Rodin within."

"No, no," said Adrienne, starting; "it must be impossible, — it is an error."

"I do not think so, mademoiselle; for knowing how important this discovery was, I begged the young girl to give me, as nearly as possible, the Abbé d'Aigrigny's description."

"Well?"

"The Abbé d'Aigrigny," said she, "is about forty years of age, tall and erect, dressed very plainly, but with care; his eyes are gray, very large and penetrating; his eyebrows thick, his hair chestnut, his face very closely shaved, and his whole appearance striking."

"This is true," said Adrienne, unable to believe what she heard. "The description is most accurate."

"Desirous of having the most precise details," added La Mayeux, "I asked the portress if M. Rodin and the Abbé d'Aigrigny seemed angry with each other when she saw them quit the house, but she told me 'No;' and that the abbé had only said to M. Rodin, as he left

the door of the house, 'To-morrow I will write to you, — that's understood.'"

"Is it a dream?" said Adrienne, applying her two hands to her forehead, with a sort of stupor. "I cannot doubt your words, my poor friend, and yet it was M. Rodin who sent you himself to that house to take assistance to your sister, and thus he would have exposed himself to your detecting his secret rendezvous with the Abbé d'Aigrigny! For a traitor, that would be very *mal-à-droit*."

"True; and I made the same reflection myself. Still the meeting of these two men appeared to me so menacing for you, mademoiselle, that I came here in the greatest possible terror."

Dispositions of extreme frankness are induced with great difficulty to give credit to treachery; the more infamous they are, the more they doubt them. Adrienne's mind was of this class, and, moreover, one of the qualities of that mind was rectitude; and thus, although La Mayeux's recital had made a great impression on her, she remarked:

"Still, my dear friend, do not let us alarm ourselves unnecessarily, — do not let us believe in evil too suddenly. Let us both try to set ourselves right by reasoning; let us recall the facts. M. Rodin opened Doctor Baleinier's house door to me, and in my presence made his accusatory charge against the Abbé d'Aigrigny; by his threats he compelled the superior of the convent to restore his daughters to Maréchal Simon; he has, too, discovered Prince Djalma's retreat, and faithfully executed my instructions as to my young relative. Yesterday, only, he gave me some most useful advice. Is not this true?"

"No doubt, mademoiselle."

"Now it may be, looking at things in their worst light, that M. Rodin has some concealed motive, and hopes to be generously rewarded by us, that may be;

but up to this moment his disinterestedness has been most complete."

"That is equally true, mademoiselle," said the poor Mayeux, compelled, like Adrienne, to give way before the evidence of what had been effected.

"Now let us consider the possibility of this treason. To coalesce again with the Abbé d'Aigrigny to betray me? — but betray me where? And when? And on what point? What have I to fear? Is it not, on the contrary, the Abbé d'Aigrigny and Madame de Saint-Dizier who have to render a fearful account to justice of the ill they have done me?"

"But then, mademoiselle, how can we explain the meeting of the two men who have so many motives to hate each other and keep separate? May not this conceal some sinister project? And then, mademoiselle, it is not I alone who think so."

"What do you mean?"

"This morning when I came here, I was so much agitated that Mlle. Florine asked me the cause of my trouble, and I know how much she is attached to you."

"It is impossible to be more devoted than she is to me, and you know you told me yourself of the service she rendered me during my confinement at Doctor Baleinier's."

"Well, mademoiselle, on my return this morning, thinking it necessary to inform you of all this as speedily as possible, I told Mlle. Florine all. Like me, and perhaps worse than myself, she was greatly alarmed at the meeting between Rodin and M. d'Aigrigny. After a moment's reflection, she said, 'I think it is useless to awaken mademoiselle; if she knows this treachery two or three hours hence, it will be all the same, and during that time I may, perhaps, be able to discover something. I have an idea, which I think a very good one, — excuse me with mademoiselle, and I will soon return.' Then Mlle. Florine sent for a coach, and went out."

"Florine is an excellent girl," said Mlle. de Cardoville, with a smile, for the reflection instantly reassured her; "but I think in this case her zeal and warm heart have misled her, as they have you, my good friend. Do you know that we are two giddy-pated damsels, you and I, for not having before thought of a thing which ought at once to have tranquillised us?"

"What is that, mademoiselle?"

"The Abbé d'Aigrigny is now, doubtless, in much dread of M. Rodin, and perhaps went to this retreat to ask his mercy. Do you think with me, that this explanation is not merely satisfactory, but the only one that is reasonable?"

"Perhaps, mademoiselle," said La Mayeux, after a moment's reflection; "yes, perhaps that is probable." Then, after a moment's silence, and as if she had yielded to a conviction superior to all possible reasoning, she exclaimed, "And yet, no, no; believe me, mademoiselle, they are deceiving you; I feel it all. Appearances are against what I declare, — but, believe me, these presentiments are too strong not to be true. And then, indeed, do you not divine fully the most secret instincts of my heart, whilst I do not, in my turn, divine the dangers which threaten you?"

"What do you mean? What have I divined?" asked Mlle. de Cardoville, involuntarily, struck and affected by the tone of La Mayeux, so full of conviction and alarm, as she continued:

"What have you divined? Alas! all the concealed susceptibilities of an unhappy creature to whom fate has made a life apart; and you must know very well that if I have been hitherto silent, it is not from ignorance of what I owe you; for who, indeed, informed you, mademoiselle, that the only means of making me accept your benefits without blushing would be to attach me to you, by giving me functions which would render me useful and serviceable to the unfortunate, whose lot

I shared so long? Who informed you, when you wished me henceforth to take my seat at your table as your friend, I, a poor work-girl, in whom you sought to elevate labour, resignation, and probity? Who informed you, when I replied to you by tears of gratitude and regret, that it was not a false modesty, but the consciousness of my deformity, which made me refuse you? Who informed you that, without that, I should have accepted with pride in the name of my sisters of the people? For you replied to me in these touching words, 'I understand your refusal, my friend. It is no false modesty that dictates it, but a sentiment of dignity which I love and respect.' Who still informed you," continued La Mayeux, with increasing animation, "that I should be so happy to find a sacred, solitary retreat in this magnificent mansion, whose splendour dazzles me? Who informed you of that which made you (as you have deigned) to choose, as you have done, an apartment by far too handsome, which you have destined for me? Who informed you that without envying the elegance of the charming women who are about you, and whom I already love, because they love you, I should always, by an involuntary comparison, feel embarrassed and ashamed before them? Who informed you that you should always think to send them away when you send for me here, mademoiselle? Yes, who has, in truth, revealed to you all those painful and secret susceptibilities of a position so distressing as mine? Who has revealed these to you? God, no doubt; he who in his infinite greatness created worlds, and who knows, in his paternal care and wisdom, how to protect and cherish the smallest insect concealed in the grass. And will you not allow the gratitude of a heart which you have divined so well to exalt itself in its turn into a divining of that which may injure you? No, no, mademoiselle, some have the instinct of self-preservation; others, more fortunate still have the instinct of the

preservation of others whom they love and cherish. This instinct God has graciously given to me. You are betrayed, I say, — you are betrayed!"

And La Mayeux, with animated look, and her cheeks slightly tinted with the emotion, spoke these last words so energetically, and accompanied them with a gesture so decisive, that Mlle. de Cardoville, already shaken by the energetic language of the young girl, now shared her apprehensions.

Moreover, although she had already fully appreciated the superior understanding, the remarkable good sense of this young child of the people, Mlle. de Cardoville had never heard La Mayeux express herself with so much eloquence, — an eloquence the more touching, as it had its source in the most noble sentiments. This circumstance added still more to the impression which Adrienne experienced. At the moment when she was about to reply to La Mayeux some one knocked at the door of the salon in which this scene was passing, and Florine entered.

When she saw the disturbed countenance of her chamberwoman Mlle. de Cardoville said to her, quickly:

"Well, Florine, what news do you bring? Where do you come from, my girl?"

"From the Hôtel de Saint-Dizier, mademoiselle."

"And why did you go there?" inquired Mlle. de Cardoville, with surprise.

"This morning, mademoiselle (and Florine pointed to La Mayeux) told me of her suspicions and uneasiness, which I shared. The Abbé d'Aigrigny's visit to M. Rodin appeared to me of most serious import, and I thought that if M. Rodin had been, during the last few hours, to the Hôtel Saint-Dizier, there could be no further doubt as to his treachery."

"Well," said Adrienne, more and more troubled, — "well?"

"Mademoiselle had desired me to attend to the removal

of the furniture from the pavilion, and several things still remained. In order to get access to the apartments it was requisite to apply to Madame Grivois, and thus I had an excuse for returning to the hôtel."

"Well, Florine; well — go on."

"I tried to sound Madame Grivois as to M. Rodin, but it was in vain."

"She mistrusted you, mademoiselle," said La Mayeux; "you might have expected that."

"I asked her," continued Florine, "if M. Rodin had been seen at the hôtel lately. She replied evasively. Then, despairing of learning anything, I quitted Madame Grivois, and, that my visit might not inspire any suspicion, I went to the pavilion, when, as I turned into one of the walks, what should I see a few paces from me, and going towards the small garden gate, but M. Rodin, who believed, no doubt, that he could go out more privately that way."

"Mademoiselle, do you hear?" exclaimed La Mayeux, clasping her hands in a supplicating manner. "Surely you will be convinced by evidence."

"He at the Princesse de Saint-Dizier's!" cried Mlle. de Cardoville, whose look, usually so mild, was now one of severest indignation, adding, in a voice that shook slightly, "Go on, Florine."

"At the sight of M. Rodin I stopped," resumed Florine, "and retreating quickly, I reached the pavilion without being seen, and entered the small passage which looks into the street. The windows look out close to the garden door. I opened one, and, leaving the outer blinds still shut, I saw a hackney-coach, which was awaiting M. Rodin, who, a few minutes afterwards, got into it, saying to the coachman, 'Rue Blanche, No. 39.'"

"The prince's abode!" cried Mlle. de Cardoville.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"And M. Rodin was to have seen him to-day," said Adrienne, reflecting.

"No doubt, if he betrayed you, mademoiselle, but he would also betray the prince, who will become his victim much more easily than yourself."

"Infamous! infamous! infamous!" exclaimed Mlle. de Cardoville, rising, and her features contracted by painful anger. "Unequalled treachery! This is enough to make me doubt everybody, — even to doubt oneself."

"Oh, mademoiselle, it is frightful, is it not?" said La Mayeux, with a shudder.

"But, then, why rescue me and mine? Why denounce the Abbé d'Aigrigny?" inquired Mlle. de Cardoville. "Really one's senses are disturbed by it. It is an abyss. Oh, what a fearful thing is doubt!"

"As I returned," said Florine, casting a tender and devoted look at her mistress, "I bethought me of a means which would allow mademoiselle to learn what the facts really are, but we have not a moment to lose."

"What do you mean?" inquired Adrienne, looking at Florine in great surprise.

"M. Rodin will be alone with the prince," said Florine.

"Unquestionably," said Adrienne.

"The prince is still in the small apartment which opens into the conservatory, and there he will receive M. Rodin."

"Well, what then?" said Adrienne.

"This conservatory, which I have arranged, as mademoiselle desired, has its only exit by a small door leading to a narrow lane. By this the gardener enters every morning in order that he may not cross the rooms. When he has finished his work he does not return that day."

"What do you mean? What is your plan?" asked Adrienne, looking at Florine, more and more surprised.

"The clumps of trees are so disposed, that I think, when the blind which conceals the glass door separating the salon from the conservatory is not lowered, we could, I think, without being seen, approach near enough to overhear what is said in the other room. It was always by this door that I have entered lately to superintend

the arrangements. The gardener had a key, and I another. Fortunately I have mine yet, and before the lapse of another hour mademoiselle may learn what ought to be her real opinion of M. Rodin; for if he deceives the prince, he deceives her, also."

"What do you mean?" said Mlle. de Cardoville.

"Mademoiselle goes this instant with me; well, we reach the door in the lone alley; I enter alone, for precaution's sake, and if the occasion appears favourable, I return —"

"Espionage!" said Mlle. de Cardoville, with hauteur, and interrupting Florine. "Can you really think of such a thing?"

"Pardon, mademoiselle," said the young girl, lowering her eyes, with a confused and distressed air; "you have your suspicions, and this appears to me the sole means by which you can confirm or destroy them."

"Sink so low as go and listen to a conversation? Never!" replied Adrienne.

"Mademoiselle," said La Mayeux, suddenly, after having been pensive for a long time, "allow me to tell you that Mlle. Florine is right; the means are painful, but that alone can determine you, perhaps for ever, as to M. Rodin; and then, too, in spite of the evidence of facts, in spite of almost the certainty of my presentiments, the most guilty appearances may be deceitful. It was I who first accused M. Rodin to you, and I should not forgive myself all my life if I have wrongfully charged him. Unquestionably it is as you say, mademoiselle, most painful to spy, — to listen, — and to overhear a conversation —"

Then making a violent and painful effort over herself, La Mayeux added, whilst she endeavoured to restrain the tears of shame which veiled her eyes:

"Still as it, perhaps, may save you, mademoiselle; for if it be a treachery, the future is most fearful — I will go, if you please, in your place — to —"

"Not another word, I entreat," cried Mlle. de Cardoville, interrupting La Mayeux. "I couldn't allow you to do — you, my poor friend, and in my interest so deeply — what appears to me degrading! Never!"

Then addressing Florine:

"Go and tell M. de Bonneville to have the carriage got ready this moment."

"You consent, then, to go?" exclaimed Florine, clasping her hands, unable to repress her joy, and her eyes became moist with tears.

"Yes — I consent," replied Adrienne, in a voice of deep emotion; "it is a war — a war to the knife, that they seek to direct against me, and I must prepare for the struggle. It would, indeed, be weakness and self-deceit not to put myself on my guard. No doubt the step is most repugnant, and costs me deeply, but it is the only means of terminating suspicions, which would be a constant torment to me; and, perhaps, prevent greater mischiefs. Then, for very important reasons, this conversation with M. Rodin and Prince Djalma may be doubly decisive for me as to the confidence or the inexorable hatred I shall have for M. Rodin. So quick, Florine, a cloak, a bonnet, and my carriage; you shall accompany me. You, my friend, await me here, I request of you," she added, addressing La Mayeux.

Half an hour after this conversation, Adrienne's carriage stopped, as we have described, at the small garden gate in the Rue Blanche.

Florine entered the conservatory, and returned soon, saying to her mistress:

"The blind is down, mademoiselle, and M. Rodin has just entered the prince's apartment."

Mlle. de Cardoville was then present (though unseen) at the following scene which passed between Rodin and Djalma.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LETTER.

Some minutes before the arrival of Mlle. de Cardoville in the conservatory, Rodin had been introduced by Faringhea to the prince, who, still under the intense excitement in which the words of the métis had plunged him, had not perceived the entrance of the Jesuit.

Rodin, surprised at the emotion visible in Djalma's features, and his almost wild manner, made an interrogative sign to Faringhea, who replied, without observation from Djalma, and with signs thus: after having placed his forefinger on his heart and his forehead, he pointed with his finger to the burning brasier, which was alight in the fireplace.

This pantomime signified that the head and heart of Djalma were in flames.

Rodin, doubtless, understood, for an imperceptible smile of satisfaction played on his corpse-like lips, and he said, in a low voice to Faringhea:

"I wish to be alone with the prince; pull down the blind, and see that no one interrupts us."

The métis bowed, then, touching a spring placed near the plate glass door, it retreated into the thickness of the wall so that the blind could fall; then, again bowing, the métis left the apartment. It was a short time after his departure that Mlle. de Cardoville and Florine reached the conservatory, which was only separated from the apartment in which Djalma was by the transparent thick-

ness of the white silk blind, worked with large, coloured birds.

The noise of the door which Faringhea shut as he went out seemed to recall the young Indian to himself; his features, still slightly animated, had resumed their habitual expression of calm and sweetness. He started, passed his hands over his forehead, looked about him, as if he were recovering from a deep reverie, then, advancing towards Rodin with an air at once respectful and embarrassed, he said to him, employing an appellation habitually used in his country to old men:

"Pardon, my father."

And then, according to the custom so full of deference of young persons towards the old, he sought to take Rodin's hand and carry it to his lips, but the Jesuit refused this homage by retreating a few steps.

"And for what do you ask pardon, my dear prince?" said he to Djalma.

"I was dreaming when you came in, and did not instantly address you. Again, pardon, father."

"And again, I pardon you, my dear prince; but let us talk a little, if you will; resume your place on the sofa, and your pipe, if you will."

But Djalma, instead of complying with Rodin's invitation, and stretching himself on the divan, as was usual with him, seated himself in an armchair, in spite of the old man with the good heart, as he called the Jesuit.

"Really, your ceremony makes one quite uncomfortable, my dear prince," said Rodin to him. "You are here in your own house in the bosom of India, or at least we desire that you should think you are there."

"Many things here recall my country to me," said Djalma, in a low and gentle voice. "Your kindnesses remind me of my father, and of him who has replaced him," added the Indian, thinking of Maréchal Simon, of whose arrival he had been, for certain reasons, kept in ignorance up to that time.

After a moment's silence, he replied in a tone of pleasure, and extending his hand to Rodin:

"You are here, and I am happy."

"I comprehend your joy, my dear prince, for I come to release you from your imprisonment, — to open your cage. I had begged you to submit to this brief voluntary confinement, which was absolutely necessary for your interest."

"Then to-morrow I may go out?"

"This very day, my dear prince."

The young Indian reflected for an instant, and then said:

"I have friends, since I am here in this palace which does not belong to me?"

"Yes, you have friends, — excellent friends," replied Rodin.

At these words Djalma's countenance seemed to expand more fully, the noblest sentiments were suddenly imprinted on his varying and expressive physiognomy; his large black eyes became slightly moistened, and, after a short silence, he rose, saying to Rodin with a tremulous voice:

"Come!"

"Where, my dear prince?" inquired the other, greatly surprised.

"To thank my friends. I have waited three days; it is a long time."

"Permit me, my dear prince — permit me — I have a great deal to say to you on this point — be so good as resume your seat."

Djalma seated himself quietly in his armchair.

Rodin continued:

"It is true, you have friends, or rather you have a friend — friends are very rare."

"But you?"

"True, true — you have two friends, my dear prince; me whom you know, and another whom you do not know, and who desires to remain unknown to you."

"Wherefore?"

"Wherefore?" replied Rodin, after a short embarrassment. "Because the happiness which he experiences in giving you proofs of his friendship, because his tranquillity are the price of this mystery."

"Why should he who does good conceal himself?"

"Sometimes to conceal the good he does, my dear prince."

"I profit by this friendship; wherefore should he conceal himself from me?"

The repeated wherefores of the young Indian seemed rather to perplex Rodin, who, nevertheless, replied:

"I have told you, my dear prince, that your secret friend would, perhaps, have his tranquillity compromised if he were known."

"If he were known for my friend?"

"Precisely so, dear prince."

Djalma's features assumed an expression of melancholy dignity; he raised his head disdainfully, and said, in a stern and haughty voice:

"Since this friend conceals himself, it is he who blushes for me, or I who ought to blush for him. I do not accept hospitality but from persons of whom I am worthy, or who are worthy of me, — I leave this house."

And as he said this, Djalma rose so resolutely that Rodin exclaimed:

"But listen to me, then, my dear prince; you are, allow me to say it, remarkably hasty, impetuous. Although we have endeavoured to recall to you your beautiful country, we are here in the heart of Europe, the heart of France, the heart of Paris; this consideration ought somewhat to modify your mode of viewing things, and I entreat you to listen to me."

In spite of Djalma's complete ignorance of certain social conventions, he had too much good sense, too much right feeling, not to be amenable to reason, when it appeared to him to be reason, and Rodin's words

calmed him. With that ingenuous modesty usually inherent in natures full of strength and generosity, he replied, softly:

"Father, you are right, I am not in my own country; here habits are different. I will reflect on this."

Despite his cunning and plasticity, Rodin found himself some time defeated by the uncultivated turns of mind and the unforeseen ideas of the young Indian. He saw him now, to his great surprise, remain pensive for some minutes; after which Djalma continued, in a tone calm but full of conviction:

"I have obeyed you, my father; I have reflected."

"Well, my dear prince?"

"In no country in the world, under no pretext whatsoever, ought a man of honour, who has friendship for a man of honour, to conceal it."

"But if it is dangerous for him to avow this friendship?" said Rodin, extremely uneasy at the turn which the conversation was taking.

Djalma looked at the Jesuit with disdainful astonishment, and made no reply.

"I understand your silence, my dear prince, a brave man should face danger — true; but if it were you that the danger threatened, in case this friendship were discovered, would not this man of honour be excusable, even praiseworthy, if he desired to rest unknown?"

"I will accept nothing from a friend who believes me capable of denying him through cowardice."

"Dear prince, hear me."

"Adieu, father."

"Reflect."

"I have said!" added Djalma, in a brief and almost kingly tone, and advancing towards the door.

"Eh, but indeed, suppose it were a female who was the party concerned!" exclaimed Rodin, driven to his wits' end, and hastening towards him, for he was really alarmed to see Djalma thus determined

to quit the house, and so completely overturn all his projects.

At these last words of Rodin, the Indian stopped abruptly.

"A female?" said he, starting and turning crimson; "is there a female concerned?"

"Yes, yes, there is a female concerned," answered Rodin; "do you now understand her reserve and the secrecy with which she is obliged to envelope those proofs of affection which she is desirous of giving you?"

"A female?" repeated Djalma, in a tremulous voice, and clasping his hands with fervour; and his fine features expressed his deep internal feeling. "A female?" he repeated, "a Parisian?"

"Yes, my dear prince, since you compel me to this indiscretion, I must own the fact to you — it is — it concerns a venerable Parisian — a worthy matron — virtue itself — and whose advanced years call for all your respect."

"Is she very aged?" inquired poor Djalma, whose charming vision had melted suddenly

"Into air, into thin air."

"Some years my senior," replied Rodin, with an ironical smile, expecting to see the young man express a kind of comic spite or angry regret. He did neither.

To the amorous, impassioned enthusiasm, which had for an instant expanded over the features of the prince, succeeded a respectful and tender expression; he looked at Rodin with deep emotion, and said to him in soft accents:

"This female is then to me as a mother?"

It is impossible to depict the charm (so pious, melancholy, and tender) with which the Indian uttered to him the words, "a mother!"

"Just so, dear prince, this respectable lady seeks to be a mother to you; but I cannot reveal to you the cause

of the affection which she bears you. Only believe me this affection is sincere; the cause of it is honourable, and if I do not reveal this secret, it is because with us the secrets of all women, young or old, are sacred."

"That is just, and her secret shall be sacred for me; without seeing her I will love her with respect, as we love God without seeing him."

"Now, dear prince, let me tell you the intentions of your maternal friend. This house will always remain at your disposal, if you so please. The French servants, a carriage and horses, will be at your orders: all the expenses of your establishment will be paid. Then, as a son of a king ought to live royally, I have left in the next apartment a casket containing five hundred louis. Every month a like sum will be handed to you. If that is not sufficient for what we call your private expenses, you must tell me, and I will increase it."

Djalma made a movement, and Rodin hastened to add:

"I must tell you, also, my dear prince, that your delicacy may rest perfectly content. In the first place, one accepts of any and everything from a mother; then, as in three months hence you will be put in possession of an enormous inheritance, it will be easy for you, if this obligation weighs upon you (at the utmost the sum can scarcely reach four or five thousand louis), it will be easy for you to repay these advances; therefore do not economise or spare, satisfy all your fancies. It is wished that you should appear in the leading ranks of Parisian fashion as the son of a king, surnamed the "Father of the Generous," should do. Thus, once again, I entreat you, do not be restrained by any false delicacy; and, if this sum is not sufficient —"

"I will ask for more; my mother is right, — a king's son should live like a king."

Such was the Indian's reply in perfect simplicity, and without appearing the least astonished in the world at

these superb offers; and yet it was very natural. Djalma would have done what was done for him; for we know what are the traditions of the prodigal magnificence and splendid hospitality of Indian princes. Djalma had been as deeply excited as grateful when he learned that a female loved him with maternal affection. As to the luxury with which she desired to enrich him, he accepted it without astonishment and without scruple.

This resignation was another contretemps for Rodin who had prepared several excellent arguments to induce the prince to accept.

"Well, then, this is all clearly understood, my dear prince," said the Jesuit. "Now, as it is necessary that you should see the world, and enter it by the best gate, as we say, why, one of the friends of your maternal protectress, M. le Comte de Montbron, an old man full of experience, and belonging to the highest society, will present you in the principal circles of Paris — "

"Why do not you present me, father?"

"Alas, my dear prince, look at me, and tell me if I could do such a thing. No, no, I live alone and in retirement. And, besides," added Rodin, after a brief silence, and fixing on the young prince a penetrating, searching, and inquisitive look, as if he would have submitted him to a kind of experiment by the following words, "and then, you see, M. de Montbron would be even better than me, in the world with which he mixes, to enlighten you as to the snares that may be spread for you. For, if you have friends, you have also enemies, you know, — base enemies, who have abused your confidence in an infamous manner, and have ill-used you. And, as unfortunately their power is equal to their wickedness, it might be, perhaps, prudent to try and avoid them, — to fly them instead of resisting them face to face."

At the recollection of his enemies, at the thought of flying from them, Djalma shook from head to foot, his

features became suddenly of a livid paleness, his eyes, which were widely opened, and whose pupils were thus encircled with white, sparkled with dark fire. Never did disdain, hatred, and the thirst of vengeance light up a human countenance more terribly. His upper lip as red as blood showed his small, white, and close-set teeth, whilst it curled up convulsively, and gave his face, just now so charming, an expression of ferocity so brutal that Rodin rose from his chair and cried:

"What ails you, prince? You frighten me."

Djalma made no reply. Half leaning on his seat, his two hands clenched with rage and locked in each other, he seemed to fasten himself to one of the arms of his chair for fear of giving way to the excess of his fearful rage. At this moment it chanced that the amber top of his hooka pipe rolled under his feet, and such was the violent tension which contracted all the Indian's nerves, that, in spite of his youthful and slender appearance, such was his strength that with one motion of his foot he pulverised the amber to atoms, notwithstanding its excessive hardness.

"In the name of Heaven, prince, what ails you?" inquired Rodin.

"Thus will I crush my base enemies!" exclaimed Djalma, with a threatening and inflamed look.

Then, as if these words had consummated his rage, he bounded from his seat, and then, with haggard eyes, paced up and down and about the apartment for several seconds with rapid strides as if he were seeking some sort of weapon, uttering from time to time a sort of hoarse cry, which he tried to stifle by pressing his clenched fists against his mouth whilst his jaws quivered convulsively. It was the impotent rage of a wild beast thirsting for carnage.

The young Indian was thus of grand and savage beauty. It was evident that those divine instincts of sanguinary ardour and blind intrepidity, raised to such

a pitch by the horror of treachery and cowardice, when directed to war or those giant hunts of India more slaughtering than even a battle itself, would make of Djalma what he was — a hero!

Rodin gazed with deep and sinister delight at the maddened impetuosity of the young Indian, who, under certain circumstances, would assuredly give way to these terrible explosions.

Suddenly, to the great surprise of the Jesuit, this tempest calmed. Djalma's fury was suddenly appeased, because reflection told him how vain was this display. Then ashamed of his childish temper, he cast down his eyes. His features remained pale and sombre; and, then, with calmness, the more to be dreaded after the violent gust of passion to which he had given way, he said to Rodin:

"Father, to-day you must lead me to the face of my enemies."

"For what, my dear prince, what would you?"

"Kill these cowards."

"Kill them! You do not think of such a thing?"

"Faringhea will aid me."

"Once again, reflect that you are not here on the banks of the Ganges, where a man slays his enemy as he would a tiger in the chase."

"We fight with a noble foe; we kill a traitor like an accursed dog," replied Djalma, with as much conviction as calmness.

"Ah, prince, you whose father was called the Father of the Generous!" said Rodin, in a serious tone. "What joy shall you find in striking creatures as cowardly as they are wicked?"

"To destroy what is dangerous is a duty."

"But, then, prince, revenge!"

"I do not revenge myself on a serpent," said the prince, with bitter haughtiness, "I crush it!"

"But, my dear prince, here we do not get rid of

our enemies in this way; if we have to complain of them — "

"Women and children complain," said Djalma, interrupting Rodin, "men strike."

"Yes, on the banks of the Ganges, my dear prince, but not here. Here society takes your cause in hand, examines it, judges it, and, if need be, punishes it."

"In my own offences I am judge and executioner."

"I pray of you to listen to me. You have escaped the odious snares of your enemies, have you not? Well, suppose that has been effected by the devotedness of the venerable female who has for you the tenderness of a mother; now, if she asked you to pardon them, she who has saved you from them, what should you do?"

The Indian bowed his head, and remained for some moments without making any reply.

Profiting by this hesitation Rodin continued:

"I might say to you, prince, I know your enemies, but, in the fear of seeing you commit some terrible imprudence, I will conceal their names from you for ever. Well, now I swear to you that if the estimable person who loves you as a son finds it just and useful that I should tell you their names, I would tell you. But until she has so empowered me, I shall be silent"

Djalma looked at Rodin with a sombre and angry air.

At this moment Faringhea entered, and said to Rodin:

"A man has been to your house to take a letter to you; they told him that you were here, and he has come. Must I take the letter? He says it comes from M. l'Abbé d'Aigrigny."

"Certainly," said Rodin; then he added, "that is, with the prince's permission?"

Djalma made a sign with his head. Faringhea went out.

"You will excuse me, dear prince; I expected this morning a very important letter, and as it was de-

layed, being unwilling to fail in coming here, I left word at home that it should be forwarded to me here."

Some instants afterwards Faringhea returned with a letter, which he handed to Rodin, after which the métis left the apartment.

CHAPTER XIII.

ADRIENNE AND DJALMA.

As soon as Faringhea had quitted the apartment, Rodin took the letter from the Abbé d'Aigrigny in one hand, while with the other he appeared searching for something, first in the side pocket of his greatcoat, then in the hinder one, next in the pocket of his trousers; but not discovering what he sought, laid the letter upon the threadbare knee of his old black trousers, while both hands were busily occupied in feeling in all directions for what he required, while his manner indicated equal vexation and uneasiness.

All these cleverly enacted pantomimic gestures were crowned by the exclamation of "God bless me, how very unfortunate!"

"What is the matter?" inquired Djalma, roused from the reverie into which he had been for several minutes plunged.

"My dear prince," replied Rodin, "the most trifling and common occurrence has befallen me, and yet it is a matter of serious annoyance and inconvenience under present circumstances. The fact is, I have either lost or forgotten my spectacles, and what with the imperfect light here, and the wretched state to which labour and old age have reduced my sight, I cannot manage to read this letter, which is of the first importance, for I am expected to return an answer at once prompt, decisive, and categorical, — an affirmative or negative, — and, unfortunately, time presses. It is most unfortunate! If,

indeed," added Rodin, laying considerable emphasis on his words, without, however, looking at Djalma, but rather seeking to attract his attention, — "if, indeed, there were any person who could read it for me. But, no, no! That is out of the question — no one can aid me!"

"Father," said Djalma, kindly, "will you allow me to read it for you? Be assured that directly I have done so, I shall forget every word that it contains."

"You!" exclaimed Rodin, as though the proposition of the young Indian had been alike preposterous and dangerous. "Oh, dear no, — impossible, prince! You read this letter, you?"

"I beg of you to pardon me for having proposed to do so," said Djalma, mildly.

"And yet," resumed Rodin, after a brief consideration, and as though speaking to himself, "why should I not accept?" Then addressing Djalma, he added, "Would you really have the goodness to read it for me, my dear prince? I should not have ventured to ask such a thing, but since you have had the complaisance to propose rendering me this great service, I cannot bring myself to refuse it, in the great emergency in which I am placed."

So saying, Rodin gave the open letter to Djalma, who, in a clear and distinct voice, read as follows:

"Your visit of this morning to the Hôtel Saint-Dizier, according to the account I have received of it, can only be considered as a fresh aggression on your part. You will find herein the last proposition that will be made you. It may possibly fail equally with the arrangement I endeavoured to persuade you to enter into when I called upon you yesterday in the Rue Clovis.

"After the long and painful explanation which then took place, I promised to write to you, and, by way of keeping my promise, I now send you my ultimatum; and, first, beware how you proceed.

"Take care. If you persist in maintaining an unequal struggle, you will expose yourself even to the scorn and hatred of those you foolishly seek to protect. There are a thousand ways of injuring you for ever in their estimation by enlightening them on your schemes, and of convincing them you have been concerned in the conspiracy against them, which you now pretend to unveil, and that your motives, in feigning to be their friend, arise not from generosity but cupidity."

Although Djalma had the instinctive delicacy to perceive the impropriety of questioning Rodin respecting this letter, yet he involuntarily turned an inquiring look towards the Jesuit, as he pronounced these last words.

"Yes, my dear prince," said Rodin, pointing to his old and faded garments, "they accuse a poor old man like me of being actuated by mercenary and interested motives in the little good I am enabled to do."

"And who are your protégés?"

"Who are they?" repeated Rodin, with feigned hesitation, as if embarrassed how to reply; "who are they? Oh, I'll tell you! Poor, unfortunate, and destitute beings, now in poverty and distress, but entitled to considerable wealth, for which they are now contending in a lawsuit, but are threatened with utter annihilation by some all-powerful personages, who, however, are happily sufficiently well known to me to enable me to unmask their villainous designs, and to turn my knowledge to the advantage of my poor protégés; for poor and humble myself, it follows, as a matter of course, I should espouse the cause of those who, like me, are miserable and obscure. But let me beg of you to continue reading."

Djalma resumed:

"You have, therefore, everything to fear in acting hostilely towards us, and nothing to hope for in espousing the part of those you call your friends, but who may be more justly styled your dupes; for as your disinterestedness would, if real, be inexplicable, so is it beyond

a doubt that it is merely assumed, to conceal your own greedy and avaricious views. And even viewing it in this light, we are disposed to offer you an ample compensation, with the additional recommendation of our offers being tangible and of immediate fulfilment, while the hopes you may have built upon, from the gratitude of your friends, are altogether vague and uncertain. To come to the point, the following are the terms to which you are required to accede: You shall quit Paris before twelve o'clock to-night at the very latest, and bind yourself not to return for six months."

Unable to restrain a movement of surprise, Djalma again looked earnestly at Rodin.

"To be sure," said the latter, "the suit of my poor protégés would be decided before then; and, by sending me out of the way, they deprive them of my watchful superintendence and counsel. Does not this strike you, my dear prince?" said Rodin, with the most bitter indignation. "But have the kindness to continue, and pardon me for having interrupted you; but such unblushing assurance was too much for me."

Djalma read as follows:

"And that we may be assured of your absence from Paris during the six months specified, you will be required to go to the houses of persons known to us in Germany, who will show you every attention, but with whom you must necessarily abide until the prescribed term shall have expired."

"Yes;" observed Rodin, contemptuously, "they offer me a voluntary prison!"

"Upon your acceptance of these conditions you will receive a monthly allowance, from the date of your departure from Paris, of ten thousand francs, and twenty thousand more at the termination of the six months. This will be fully secured to you, and, at the expiration of the above named period, a situation, both honourable and independent, will be provided for you."

Djalma having paused from the excess of his involuntary indignation, Rodin exclaimed:

"Let me request of you to proceed. My dear prince, pray read the conclusion of this epistle; it will serve to give you some idea of what is passing in the very bosom of civilisation."

Djalma resumed:

"You are sufficiently aware of the state of things, and also of our position, to be quite assured that, in removing you to a distance, our only aim is to be freed from an opponent who is rather annoying than dangerous. Be not blinded by your former success. The consequences of your denunciation against me are entirely put an end to, because the charge preferred by you was palpably calumnious, and even the magistrate before whom you preferred it now deeply laments his undue partiality in listening to your fabricated tale. You are at liberty to make what use you please of this letter. We know full well what we have said, how we have written, and to whom such writing is addressed. You will receive this letter at three o'clock. If, by the expiration of an hour, we have not your full and unequivocal assent to all herein proposed, written and subscribed by your own hand at the bottom of this letter, war begins again between us, and from this very night."

The letter concluded, Djalma looked towards Rodin, who said:

"Give me leave to call Faringhea."

So saying he touched the bell, which had scarcely sounded ere the métis appeared.

Rodin receiving the letter from the hands of Djalma, first tore it in half, then rolling it up in a kind of ball, he handed it to the métis, saying:

"You will give this paper to the person who waits, and tell him that is my only reply to its base and insolent contents! You understand — its base and insolent contents!"

"I will faithfully deliver your words," replied the métis, and quitted the room.

"This may be a dangerous warfare for you, my father," said the Indian, with sympathising interest.

"I doubt not it will prove so, my dear prince; but I do not follow your example, — seek to kill my enemies, because they are base and cowardly; but I wage war with them, sheltered by the protecting ægis of the law. Follow my example." Then, perceiving the features of Djalma again overcast, Rodin added, "I am wrong. I will not again intrude my advice upon this subject. Promise me only to refer the question to the judgment of your excellent maternal protectress, whom I shall see to-morrow. And then, if she consents, I will tell you the name of your enemies, but not otherwise."

"And is this unknown friend — this second mother," cried Djalma, "a person to whose decision I may venture to leave so important a matter?"

"Is she?" exclaimed Rodin, clasping his hands, and assuming an appearance of rapidly increasing enthusiasm. "Is she? Nay, the universe contains not a more noble, generous, or exalted mind than that which actuates every thought of your admirable protectress; and sure I am, that were you really her son, whom she loved with all the passionate tenderness of maternal affection, and if it became a question whether you should choose between death and cowardice, she would say, 'Die, my son! I can at least die with you!'"

"Oh, noble lady!" exclaimed Djalma, with enthusiastic ardour; "such was my own mother!"

"But for your protectress," continued Rodin, still increasing in energetic warmth, and contriving to approach nearer and nearer to the silken blind which masked the greenhouse, towards which he cast a sidelong and uneasy glance, "how shall I attempt to give you any adequate idea of her excellence? Picture to yourself the living personification of honour, courage,

and goodness — of undeviating truth — such a mixture, indeed, of the rarest virtues as might be expected to be found in the noblest, bravest-hearted man, united with the graceful pride of one who not only has never sullied her lips by falsehood, but has never even deigned to conceal a thought, and who would infinitely prefer death to being compelled to employ the many petty artifices, deceptions, and concealments almost necessarily forced upon females by reason of their very position in social life."

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to express the admiration which glowed in the features of Djalma as he listened to this animated description; his eyes sparkled, his cheeks were flushed, and his heart beat high with enthusiastic delight.

"Noble youth!" cried Rodin, taking another step towards the blind. It gratifies me thus to see your ardent feelings depicted on your expressive countenance, while I thus speak of your unknown protectress. Ah, trust me, she well deserves that almost religious adoration with which we regard all great and surpassingly gifted persons."

"I feel assured of it!" exclaimed Djalma, with much excitement "I know by the throbbings of my heart, which bounds with deep and admiring gratitude! Still, also, am I lost in surprise; for my mother is no more, and yet another female of such rare virtues lives to adorn the earth!"

"She does; for the consolation of the afflicted — to be the pride and ornament of her sex — to teach the world to worship truth, persecute vice, she is permitted to exist. Never has falsehood or artifice tarnished the pure brightness of her upright mind, stainless and unsullied as the sword of a brave and gallant knight. Only a few days since this adorable woman made use of an expression I shall remember to the last hour of my life. 'Sir,' said she, 'directly I have cause to suspect any person whom I either love or esteem —'"

Rodin was prevented from completing his sentence, —the blind, so violently shaken from without that its spring broke, ran suddenly up, and, to the almost speechless astonishment of Djalma, revealed the form of Mlle. de Cardoville. The covering had fallen from the shoulders of Adrienne, and, during the violence of her exertions to reach the blind, her hat, the strings of which were not tied, had dropped to the ground.

Having so hastily and unexpectedly quitted her own house, Adrienne had merely thrown a cloak over the elegant and tasteful costume she frequently wore when at home, and so radiant with beauty did she appear among the blooming plants and green foliage by which she was surrounded, that Djalma believed himself under the influence of a dream.

With distended gaze, clasped hands, and bending forwards as though in act of prayer, he remained transfixed with admiration. Mlle. de Cardoville, evidently much agitated, her cheeks tinged with a brighter hue than ordinary, made no attempt to enter the salon, but remained motionless at the entrance to the greenhouse. All this had taken place in less time than is required to describe it, and scarcely had the blind sprung up than Rodin, with well-feigned surprise, exclaimed:

"You here, mademoiselle?"

"Yes," said Adrienne, in a tremulous voice; "I come to complete the sentence you had begun. I once told you, that when any doubt arose in my mind as to the good faith of a person, I always made it a practice to acquaint the suspected individual, without reserve, of what was passing in my mind; yet I have failed in this act of justice towards you. I was here as a spy upon your proceedings, when your reply to the letter of the Abbé d'Aigrigny afforded me another proof of your sincerity and devotion. I suspected your integrity at the very moment when you were asserting my truth and candour. For the first time in my life I have stooped to

artifice. This weakness well deserves its punishment, that punishment I now endure from the reproaches of my own conscience. It calls for reparation, that I now make — for apologies, I here render them." Then addressing Djalma, she added, "At present, prince, secrecy is no longer possible. Allow me to introduce myself as Mlle. de Cardoville, your relative, and to hope that you will accept from a sister the same hospitality you would have accepted from a mother."

But Djalma answered not. Plunged in ecstatic contemplation of a creature more dazzlingly lovely than even his wildest dreams had portrayed, he experienced a species of delirium which paralysing both thought and reflection, appeared to concentrate his whole being in the one sense of seeing; and in the same manner as the feverish patient seeks to quench his inextinguishable thirst by long and repeated draughts of the pure element, which but seems to add fresh fire, so did the ardent and riveted gaze of the young Indian appear to draw in, with devouring eagerness, the absorbing delight of feasting his eyes upon so rare and perfect a specimen of beauty.

And, indeed, two more exquisite models of the divine creation could never be seen. Adrienne and Djalma were the living types of perfected beauty, as regarded their respective sexes. There appeared a something both providential and predestined in the meeting of these two beings so fresh in buoyant youth and vigour, so full of warm and generous impulses, so heroically proud and daring; and who, strange to say, knew each other's moral value even before they had met; for, if the words of Rodin had kindled in the heart of Djalma an admiration, as sudden as it was deep and enthusiastic, for the noble qualities and rare endowments of that unknown benefactor, whom he now found to be no other than Mlle. de Cardoville herself, so had the latter, in her turn, been both moved, touched, and terrified during the conversation she had just overheard between Rodin

and Djalma, in the course of which the latter had, by degrees, exposed, not only the delicacy and nobleness of his sentiments and the excellency of his heart, but also the violent impetuosity of his character; neither had she been able to restrain a movement of surprise, almost amounting to admiration, at the sight of the uncommon beauty of the young prince, which was quickly followed by a feeling at once strange and painful, — a sort of electric shock, which appeared to pass throughout her whole frame as her eyes encountered the warm, thrilling gaze of the enraptured Indian.

Deeply moved and agitated by the powerful impression she had received, Adrienne sought to conceal the nature of her emotion by addressing Rodin, and soliciting his pardon for having suspected him; but the prolonged silence of the prince gave additional strength to the embarrassment Adrienne was striving to conceal. Raising her eyes a second time towards Djalma, as though to ask for his reply to her sisterly offers of service, she encountered the fixed and ardent gaze of the Indian riveted on her countenance with an almost wildness of expression, and such an intensity of admiration, as caused her to cast down her looks with mingled terror, sadness, and wounded pride, and doubly to congratulate herself on having foreseen the absolute necessity for keeping the prince from her presence. So great was the feeling of alarm and disquietude, occasioned by his undisguised ardour and impetuosity, that she hastened to put an end to it, as well as to her own unpleasant position, by saying to Rodin, in a low and trembling voice:

"I pray of you, sir, to speak to the prince, and repeat to him my offers of hospitality and sisterly service, for myself I cannot remain here longer."

So speaking, Adrienne moved for the purpose of rejoining Florine, but with a sudden bound the young Indian sprung forward as a tiger darts upon the prey

about to be snatched from him. Terrified at the wild and ardent expression which lit up the features of the young Indian, Adrienne drew back with sudden terror, uttering a loud cry as she did so.

At this sound Djalma recovered himself and recalled all that had occurred; as the full particulars rose to his mind's view his eyes filled with tears of shame and regret for his past violence, his countenance was marked with the deepest, yet most gentle and melancholy contrition, while, in despairing sorrow, he threw himself on his knees before Adrienne, and, raising his clasped hands towards her, cried, in a voice at once mournfully sweet, supplicating, and timid:

"Oh, stay! I beseech you, stay! Oh, do not leave me; 'tis so long since I have been awaiting you!"

To this prayer, uttered with all the timid persuasiveness of a child, but with a resignation which contrasted powerfully with the almost savage impetuosity which had so greatly alarmed Adrienne not long before, she replied, while making signs to Florine to expedite their departure:

"Prince, it is quite impossible for me to remain here longer."

"But you will return?" said Djalma, making a violent effort to restrain his almost overpowering emotion. "I shall again be permitted to behold you?"

"Never, never!" cried Mlle. de Cardoville, in a faint voice.

Then profiting by the consternation into which her reply had thrown the prince, Adrienne quickly disappeared behind a large clump of plants and quitted the greenhouse.

At the moment, when Florine, hastening after her mistress, was compelled to pass by Rodin, the latter said, in a low and hurried tone:

"We must finish with La Mayeux to-morrow."

Florine shuddered as though the hand of death were

on her; but without making any reply she also disappeared behind the shrubs.

Overcome with the intensity of his feelings, Djalma still remained kneeling as Adrienne had left him, his head drooping on his breast, while his faultless features, in lieu of rage or impatience, were marked only by an expression of the deepest sorrow and perplexity, while large tears trickled silently down his cheeks.

As Rodin approached him he rose, but trembling so violently that he could barely totter into the adjoining room, where, falling on the divan, he covered his face with his hands.

Drawing near to him with a tender and commiserating air, Rodin murmured forth:

"Alas, I dread this! I was anxious to conceal from you the name of your benefactress; nay, I even told you she was old. Can you guess why, my dear prince?"

Djalma made no reply, but, letting fall his hands, turned towards Rodin, his face still bathed in tears.

"Because I was aware of the surpassing loveliness of Mlle. de Cardoville, and also how quickly young persons of your age are fascinated by beauty; and," pursued Rodin, "I wished, my dear prince, to spare you the painful trial to your feelings, since your young and charming protectress is tenderly attached to a young and handsome individual of this city."

At these words Djalma pressed both hands on his heart, as though to still some severe pain, uttered a wild and frantic cry; then his head fell back, he sunk senseless on the divan.

Rodin eyed him for several moments with cool disregard; then preparing to go, he said, while brushing his old hat with the sleeve of his greasy, threadbare coat:

"Oh, that stings deep, does it?"

CHAPTER XIV.

CONFIDENCES AND COUNSELS.

It was night. Nine o'clock had just struck.

It was on the evening of the day when Mlle. de Cardoville had, for the first time, seen Djalma. Florine, pale, agitated, and trembling, had just entered with a light in her hand into a sleeping apartment, furnished with much simplicity, but yet very comfortable.

This room was one of those which La Mayeux occupied at Adrienne's house. It was on the ground floor, and had two entrances, one opening on the garden, and the other into the courtyard; and it was on this side that persons came who were desirous of seeing La Mayeux to obtain alms or assistance. A meeting-room and a receiving-room were the other apartments, which were completed by the bedroom, into which Florine had just entered, with a disturbed and almost frightened air, hardly touching the carpet with the points of her satin shoes, and holding her breath and listening to every sound.

Placing her light on the mantelpiece, the chambermaid, after a hasty glance around the chamber, went towards a mahogany bureau surrounded by a very pretty bookcase well filled. The key was in the drawers, all three of which Florine searched. They contained various petitions for aid, and some notes in La Mayeux's handwriting. What Florine was seeking for was not there. A case containing three smaller drawers separated the

flap of table from the bookcase, and these were also examined, but also to no purpose. Florine made a gesture of vexation, looked about her, listened again with anxiety, and then, observing a small cupboard, made there, also, fresh but unavailing search.

At the foot of the bed was a small door leading to a large dressing-room, into which Florine entered, and at first sought uselessly in a large closet, in which hung several black dresses newly made for La Mayeux by Mlle. de Cardoville's order. Seeing on the ground, at the extremity of this cupboard, and half hidden by a cloak, an old trunk, Florine hastily opened it, and found therein, very carefully folded up, the miserable worn-out garments in which La Mayeux was clad when she had entered this abode of wealth and splendour.

Florine started, — an involuntary emotion contracted her features, but, reflecting that she must not let her heart soften, but obey the implacable mandates of Rodin, she shut the trunk and the dressing-room door, and returned into the bedroom.

After having again examined the bureau an idea crossed her mind; not content with again searching the smaller drawers, she quite drew out one, hoping to find what she sought for between the back of the drawers and the bureau, but she saw nothing. The second attempt was more successful, and she found hidden a thick copy-book. She made a motion of surprise, for she expected to find something else, but she took the manuscript and, opening it, turned the leaves over with much rapidity. After having run her eye over several pages she appeared satisfied, and was about to put the copy-book in her pocket, but, after a moment's reflection, she replaced it where she had discovered it, put all again into its former state, took up her candlestick, and left the apartment without having been detected, having assured herself that La Mayeux would be with Mlle. de Cardoville for some hours.

CONFIDENCES AND COUNSELS.

The day after Florine's search, La Mayeux, alone in her sleeping-room, was seated in an armchair by the chimney-corner, where a good fire was blazing. A thick carpet covered the floor, through the curtains of the window was seen the bank of a large garden, — the deep silence was unbroken but by the regular noise of the pendulum of a timepiece and the crackling of the fire.

La Mayeux, with her two hands leaning on the arms of her chair, was enjoying a feeling of happiness which she had not given way to so completely since her residence in the hôtel. For her, so long accustomed to cruel privations, there was an inexpressible charm in the quiet of this retreat, in the smiling appearance of the garden, and, above all, in the consciousness of owing the enjoyment she experienced to the resignation and energy she had evinced in the midst of so many severe trials, now so happily ended.

An elderly woman, of mild and gentle appearance, who had been, by Adrienne's express orders, attached to the service of La Mayeux, entered, and said to her:

"Mademoiselle, there is a young man who wants to speak to you directly on a very urgent matter; he says his name is Agricola Baudoin."

At this name La Mayeux uttered a slight cry of surprise, blushed slightly, and, rising, ran to the door which led to the adjoining apartment, where she found Agricola.

"Good day, my dear Mayeux," said the smith, cordially embracing the young girl, whose cheek became burning and crimsoned with his fraternal kisses.

"Ah!" she then cried, suddenly looking at Agricola with alarm, "what is this black bandage over your forehead? Have you been wounded?"

"Oh, it is nothing — really nothing, do not think of it. I will tell you all about it presently; but, first of all, I have something very important to communicate to you!"

"Come, then, into the next room, where we shall be alone," said La Mayeux, leading Agricola.

In spite of the great uneasiness which displayed itself on Agricola's features, he could not repress a smile of pleasure as he entered the young girl's room and looked about him.

"Capital, my dear Mayeux; this is the way I always wished to see you placed, and I can recognise the kind hand of Mlle. de Cardoville in this. What a heart! What a soul! You do not know that she wrote to me the day before yesterday to thank me for what I had done for her, and sending me a plain gold pin, which she added I could accept, for it had no value except that of having been worn by her mother. If you know how much I was touched by the delicacy of the gift!"

"Nothing should astonish you from a heart like hers," replied La Mayeux. "But your wound — your wound?"

"Directly, my good little Mayeux; I have so many things to tell you! Let me begin with that which is most important; for it is in a very serious matter that I require your good advice. You know full well what confidence I have in your excellent heart and sound judgment; and then, after that, I shall ask a service from you — yet a great service," added the smith, in a serious and almost solemn tone, which astonished La Mayeux; and he then added, "But let me begin with what does not concern myself —"

"Oh, do be quick!"

"After my mother had gone with Gabriel to a small curacy which he has procured in the country, and my father took up his abode with Maréchal Simon and his daughters, I went, as you know, to reside at the factory of M. Hardy, in the general house. Well, this morning — but I should first say that M. Hardy, after his return from a long journey which he lately made, has again gone away on business for some days. Well, then, this morning at breakfast-time, I had been working a little

after the last stroke of the clock, and was leaving the buildings to go to our eating-room, when I saw a lady alight from a hackney-coach, who, entering the yard, came quickly towards me. I saw she was fair, although her veil was half-way down her face, and as gentle as she was pretty. She was dressed like a person of consequence. Struck with her paleness, her uneasy and alarmed look, I inquired what she sought. 'Sir,' she said, in a trembling voice, and seeming to make a great effort over herself, 'are you one of the workmen of this establishment?' 'Yes, madame.' 'Is M. Hardy in danger?' she cried. 'M. Hardy, madame, has not yet returned to the factory.' 'What!' she exclaimed, 'did not M. Hardy return here yesterday evening? Has he not been dangerously wounded by a machine whilst in his workrooms?' And as she pronounced these words the lips of this young lady trembled so, poor thing! and I saw large tears falling down her cheeks. 'Thank Heaven, madame, nothing is more untrue,' said I; 'for M. Hardy has not yet returned, but is expected to-morrow or next day.' 'Then, sir, you tell me true, M. Hardy really has not arrived, and is not injured?' added the pretty lady, wiping her eyes. 'I tell you the truth, madame; if M. Hardy was in danger I should not be so tranquil whilst I am speaking with you.' 'Oh, thanks, thanks!' exclaimed the young lady. Then she expressed her gratitude to me with an air so rejoicing, so happy, so touching, that I was quite moved at it. Then suddenly, and as if ashamed of the step she had taken, she dropped her veil and left me hastily, going out of the yard and entering the coach which had brought her. I said to myself, 'She is a lady who takes an interest in M. Hardy, and who has been alarmed by some false report.'"

"She loves him, doubtless," said La Mayeux, quite affected; "and, in her trouble, has perhaps committed an imprudence in coming to make these inquiries."

"No doubt you are right. I saw her get into the hackney-coach with interest, for emotion had quite gained upon me. Well, away goes the coach. But what should I see a few instants afterwards? Why, a hack cabriolet, which the young lady did not see, concealed, as it was, by the angle of the wall; and, at the moment when it drove off, I clearly distinguished a man sitting beside the coachman, who made him a sign to follow in the same road that the hackney-coach was taking."

"The poor young lady was followed," said La Mayeux, with uneasiness.

"No doubt. So I ran after the hackney-coach, which I overtook; and at one of the windows, when the blind was down, I said to the young lady, as I ran by the side of the coach door, 'Madame, be on your guard, you are followed by some one in a cabriolet.'"

"Good! — capital — Agricola! And what did she say?"

"I heard her exclaim, '*Grand Dieu!*' in a tone of deep alarm. The coach went on; and presently the cabriolet passed before me, and I saw by the side of the driver a tall, stout, red-faced man, who, having seen me run after the hackney-coach, had, perhaps, a suspicion of something, for he looked at me with a disturbed air."

"And when will M. Hardy arrive?" inquired La Mayeux.

"To-morrow or next day; and now, my little Mayeux, advise me. This young lady loves M. Hardy, that is evident. She is, no doubt, married, for she had a very embarrassed look as she talked with me, and uttered a cry of so much terror when she learned that she was followed. What ought I to do? I have a great mind to ask advice of old Simon; but he is so very rigid in his notions. And then, a love-affair at his time of life! Whilst you, my dear Mayeux, who are so delicate and sensible, you will comprehend the thing so well."

The young work-girl shook slightly, and smiled bitterly. Agricola, who did not perceive it, continued:

"Then I said to myself, there is no one but La Mayeux who can advise me in this matter, and so, if M. Hardy returns to-morrow, ought I or ought I not to tell him all that has passed?"

"Listen to me!" exclaimed La Mayeux, suddenly, interrupting Agricola, and appearing to collect her thoughts. "When I went to the convent of Ste. Marie, to ask the superior for work, she proposed to me to enter as daily needlewoman into a house where I was to watch — it is useless to conceal the word — to spy over —"

"Wretch of a woman!"

"And do you know," said La Mayeux, — "do you know that they proposed to me to enter this family to carry on this unworthy system? It was at a Madame de Fremont's, or Bremont's, — I do not quite remember which, — a very religious lady, whose daughter, a young married lady, whom I was to espy particularly, as, the superior said to me, she received the too assiduous attentions of a manufacturer."

"What do you say?" exclaimed Agricola, "if this manufacturer should be —"

"M. Hardy. I have too many reasons not to forget the name which the superior let fall. Since then so many events have transpired that I had forgotten the circumstance. It is, therefore, most probable that this young lady is she of whom she spoke to me at the convent."

"And what interest could the superior of the convent have in this espionage?" asked the smith.

"I do not know. But, you see, the interest which she has is still in full force; for the young lady has been watched, and, perhaps, at this hour has been denounced — dishonoured. Ah, it is dreadful to think of!"

Then seeing that Agricola shuddered violently, La Mayeux added, "But what ails you, then?"

"Why not?" said the smith, speaking to himself; "if all that, — why should it not all proceed from the same hand? The superior of a convent may have a good understanding with an abbé. But, then, for what purpose, to what end?"

"Explain yourself, Agricola," said La Mayeux. "And your wound — how did you receive that? Pray do satisfy me on that point."

"Why, it was of my wound I was now going to speak; for, really, the more I reflect, the more the adventure of this young lady appears to me connected with other circumstances."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you must know that, for some days past, there have been some singular transactions in the vicinity of our manufactory. In the first place, as we are in Lent, an abbé from Paris — a tall, good-looking man, they say — has been preaching in the little village of Villiers, which is but a quarter of a league from our workshops. This abbé has taken occasion in his discourse to calumniate and assail M. Hardy."

"In what way?"

"M. Hardy had drawn up and had printed a set of rules and regulations relating to our work, and the profits which he allows us. This document is followed by several maxims as noble as they are plain and simple, with some precepts of fraternity, which all the world can comprehend, extracted from different philosophers and different religions. Because M. Hardy has selected, as the most pure, from amongst different religious precepts, this abbé has taken upon himself to decide that M. Hardy has no religion of his own; and taking this conclusion for his theme, he has not only attacked him from the pulpit, but pointed out our factory as a focus of perdition, corruption, and damnation, because, on Sunday, instead of going to hear sermons or to the public-house, our workmen, their wives and children, pass the day in

working in their little gardens, in reading, singing in chorus, or dancing with their families in our general house. This abbé has gone so far as to say that such a mass of atheists, for so he calls us, will draw down the wrath of Heaven on the country; that there is much talk of the cholera, which is advancing; and it will be possible that, owing to our impious vicinity, all the environs will be smitten with this avenging scourge."

"To say such things to ignorant hearers," exclaimed La Mayeux, "is to risk exciting them to terrible actions."

"That is what this abbé is driving at, unquestionably."

"What do you mean?"

"The inhabitants of the environs, excited besides, no doubt, by some other malcontents, show themselves hostile to the workmen of our factory; and they have displayed, if not their hatred, at least their envy. Well, seeing us live in common, well lodged, well fed, well clothed, active, gay, and industrious, their jealousy is still further excited by the abbé's preachings, and the malevolent suggestions of some badly disposed fellows, whom I have recognised as some of the worst workmen at M. Tripeaud's, our rival manufacturer. All these disturbances begin to produce their fruits, and we have had two or three open quarrels with the inhabitants of the environs. It was in one of these rows that I had a blow on the head from a stone."

"Are you sure it is nothing serious, Agricola, quite sure?" asked La Mayeux, anxiously.

"Nothing of consequence, I assure you; but the enemies of M. Hardy have not confined themselves to preaching only, they have employed something even still more dangerous."

"What can that be?"

"I and almost all my comrades used our muskets pretty well in July, but it does not suit us at present, for very good reason, to take up our arms again. This

is not everybody's opinion very likely, we blame no one, but we have our own opinions, and the elder Simon, who is as brave as his son, and as patriotic as any man breathing, approves and directs us. Well, for some days past, we have found all around the factory, in the garden, in the yards, placards, in which we read: 'You are cowards, selfish cowards. Because chance has given you a good master, you remain indifferent to the misery of your brethren, and the means of emancipating them! Your own good fortune enervates you.'"

"Oh, Agricola, what a fearful persistence in wickedness!"

"Is it not? and these things have begun to have some influence over several of our younger comrades, as, after all, when generous and noble feelings are addressed, there is always an echo. So already some seeds of division are developed in our workrooms, which to this time have been so fraternally united; we feel that some secret ferment exists, and a cold distrust with several has displaced our wonted cordiality. Now, if I tell you that I am almost certain that these placards, thrown over the walls of the factory, and which have excited amongst us some displays of discord, have been spread by the emissaries of this preaching abbé, don't you think that all this, combined with what occurred this morning with respect to the young lady, proves that M. Hardy has for some time past had a number of enemies?"

"The matter appears to me as alarming as it does to you, Agricola," said La Mayeux, "and to be of so serious a description that M. Hardy alone can properly decide it. As for the affair of the lady, I advise you, directly M. Hardy returns home, to ask to see him, and however delicate may be the communication, tell him all that happened."

"There I scarcely know how to act, for will it not seem as though I sought to meddle with his private affairs?"

"Had not this lady been followed I should have partaken your scruples; but you see she was watched, and very possibly has incurred great danger. Therefore, in my opinion, it is more a matter of duty than choice to apprise M. Hardy of the whole transaction. Even supposing, as is most probable, that the lady be married, would it not be better, for a thousand reasons, that M. Hardy should be informed of everything?"

"You are quite right, my dear Mayeux, and M. Hardy shall know all; but now that we have decided upon the affairs of others, let us have a little talk about mine. Yes, of my affairs! For I have to speak to you of a matter upon which my future happiness or misery may depend," said the smith, in a tone so serious that poor La Mayeux's heart dreaded she knew not what. "You well know," said Agricola, after a short silence, "that from my earliest infancy I have been in the habit of telling you every circumstance that occurred to me. I have never concealed the merest trifle from you, but have related to you my very thoughts."

"Oh, yes, Agricola," replied La Mayeux, extending her thin and delicate hand, which the young man cordially pressed in his large, sinewy grasp, "I know you have, and always will, I hope."

"Stay! I am not quite right about telling you positively everything, because I did not like to mention many little love-affairs; which, though to be sure one might tell one's sister whatever follies or scrapes one might commit or fall into, yet, somehow, I never could bring myself to mention to so good and right-minded a girl as yourself."

"Thank you, Agricola," answered La Mayeux, casting down her eyes, and struggling heroically with the dread of coming evil, which lay heavily at her heart. "I often perceived a description of reserve in many of our conversations, though I could not guess its cause, but now I feel grateful to you for having thought about my feelings."

"But at the same time that I forbore to repeat to you

all the little love passages I occasionally amused myself with, I always determined, whenever anything of that kind seemed likely to end seriously, in marriage for instance, to let you be the very first person I should confide it to; just, you know, as a brother might entrust his sister with what he meant afterwards to submit to his father and mother. 'Then,' said I to myself, 'my dear good Mayeux shall be my first confidant.'"

"How very good of you, Agricola!"

"Well, then, something serious has happened; I am over head and ears in love, and I want to be married!"

At these fatal words the poor girl who was listening felt as though paralysed with horror; her blood seemed to curdle in her veins, an icy coldness seized her, her very sight grew dim, and for a few seconds she felt as though the hand of death was on her, — her heart ceased almost to beat, and seemed not to break, but, as it were, to dissolve, to become annihilated; but the first overwhelming agony over, like the early martyrs, who found in the very excess of their sufferings a motive for enabling them to smile even amid their excruciating tortures, the unhappy girl found, in her very dread of revealing the secret of her absurd and fatal passion, a power and resolution which enabled her, after a short pause, to look up with forced calm, almost amounting to serenity, and to say, in a steady voice:

"Indeed! You are really and seriously in love?"

"Oh, my dear La Mayeux, for the last four days I have thought of nothing else but my passion and of her who is the object of it."

"Then you have only been in love four days?"

"No longer, certainly; but that makes no difference, you know; the time has nothing to do with it; a great deal may happen in four days."

"And, of course, she is very beautiful?"

"Oh, lovely! Just imagine a shape like a fairy of the woods, such as you and I used to read about, you

remember, my dear La Mayeux; then such a skin, a lily would look dark beside her, — with large blue eyes — large as that," said Agricola, opening his own as wide as he could; "as sweet, as gentle, and as kind in their expression as — as — yours — "

"You flatter me, Agricola."

"Nonsense! You know I never should think of flattering you, — no, no! I only flatter pretty girls, like Angèle, — for that is the name of her I love, — is it not a pretty name, tell me, my dear La Mayeux, has it not a charming sound?"

"It is indeed," said the poor girl, comparing, with mournful bitterness, the contrast between this pleasing appellation and her own sobriquet of La Mayeux, pronounced even by the generous-hearted Agricola without a thought, but still courageously repressing any manifestations of regret, she repeated with desperate calmness, "Yes, indeed, any one might be pleased to have so pretty a name as Angèle."

"Well, then, if you like the name, what would you say to my Angèle, being both in heart, mind, and person precisely what that name would imply. As for her heart, I really think that, for goodness, it almost equals yours."

"Then," said La Mayeux, forcing a smile, "it seems that her eyes and her heart are like mine; it is strange, being strangers, that we should resemble each other so closely."

Agricola perceived not the bitter irony which concealed the full meaning of La Mayeux's words. He, therefore, replied with a tenderness of manner as sincere as trying to his auditor:

"Why, do you suppose, my dear La Mayeux, I could ever have felt a serious affection for any one who, in their disposition, mind, or heart, did not greatly remind me of you?"

"Come, come, brother," said La Mayeux, smiling (yes, the wretched girl, while writhing in her agony, had the

courage to force a smile), "you are disposed to be gallant to-day; but tell me, where did you become acquainted with this very charming person?"

"She is the sister of a fellow workman. Her mother is the head needlewoman who makes all the workmen's linen. During the last year she found that she required assistance, and, as it is one of the rules of our association always to give the preference to the relations of members, Madame Bertin (this is the name of my companion's mother) sent for her daughter from Lille, where she was living with one of her aunts; and, for the last five days, she has been in our linen establishment. The first time I ever saw her, I stayed for more than three hours in the evening, talking with herself, her mother, and brother. Oh, my heart was gone before the first hour had expired. The next day, and the day after, my love kept increasing, till I am fairly over head and ears, and fully bent upon marriage. If you do not disapprove — for — don't start, my dear girl — everything depends upon you — neither do I intend saying a word to my father or mother until I have had your opinion."

"Agricola, you really puzzle me; will you tell me what you mean?"

"You know how implicitly I believe in that singular instinct you possess. How often have you said to me, Agricola, mistrust such a one — love and esteem this person — place full confidence in another. Well, never in any one instance have I found you wrong. Now I want you to do me the same service again. You must ask permission of Mlle. de Cardoville to pass the day with me. I will take you to the manufactory. I have already mentioned you to Madame Bertin and her daughter as a tenderly beloved sister; and according to the impression Angèle makes upon you will depend whether I declare my love for her or no. Perhaps you may consider this as a superstitious weakness on my part, but I cannot help it."

"So let it be," replied La Mayeux, with heroical courage; "I will see your Angèle, and then give you my sincere and unbiassed opinion."

"Of that I feel quite sure; but when will you come?"

"I must inquire of Mlle. de Cardoville what day she can spare me; and then I will let you know."

"Thanks, my kind La Mayeux," said Agricola, with animated fervour; then he added, smilingly, "Only remember to bring your very best judgment with you, that which you reserve for great occasions."

"No joking, brother," said La Mayeux, in a voice of mournful earnestness; "the present affair is of deep importance, and your future happiness or misery may result from it."

At this moment some one knocked gently at the door.

"Come in," said La Mayeux.

Florine appeared.

"Mlle. de Cardoville begs you will go to her if you are not engaged," said Florine to La Mayeux.

The latter rose, and, addressing the smith, said:

"If you can wait a few minutes, Agricola, I will inquire of Mlle. de Cardoville what day I can dispose of, and I will return and tell you." So saying, the young girl quitted the room, leaving Agricola and Florine together.

"I should have been glad to have offered my humble thanks to Mlle. de Cardoville to-day," said Agricola, "but that I feared to be intrusive."

"My young lady is somewhat indisposed to-day," said Florine, "and sees no one; but I am sure that she will receive you with pleasure directly she is better."

La Mayeux here returned to the apartment, saying to Agricola:

"If you will call for me to-morrow, about three o'clock, — and then I shall not lose my whole day, — I will accompany you to the manufactory; and in the evening you can see me safe home again."

"That will do nicely. Then fare you well — till three o'clock to-morrow, my dear La Mayeux."

"Good-bye, Agricola; at three o'clock I shall expect you."

The evening of the same day, when all was still in the hotel, La Mayeux, who had remained with Mlle. de Cardoville till ten o'clock, entered her bedchamber, the door of which she locked; then, finding herself at last alone, and free from all constraint, she threw herself on her knees before an armchair, and burst into tears. Long, long did the sorely tried girl continue to weep. When, at length, her eyes refused to shed more tears, she arose, dried her eyes, and, approaching her desk, took from it the paper book; then removed from its hiding-place the manuscript so hastily perused by Florine the preceding night, and continued for several hours to write attentively in its pages.

CHAPTER XV.

LA MAYEUX'S JOURNAL.

We have already said that La Mayeux had written for a considerable portion of the night, in the book discovered and scrutinised on the previous evening by Florine, who had not dared to abstract it before she had acquainted with its contents the persons under whose directions she was acting, and having received their final instructions.

Let us explain the existence of this manuscript before we open it to the reader.

From the day on which La Mayeux had felt her love for Agricola, the first word of this manuscript had been written.

Endued with a disposition essentially loving, and yet feeling herself always restrained by fear of ridicule, a fear whose painful excess was La Mayeux's only weakness, to whom could this unfortunate girl have confided the secret of her fatal passion, but to paper, — to that mute confidant of brooding or wounded hearts, that patient, silent, calm friend, which, if it do not respond to the woes of the unhappy, at least always listens to, always remembers, them?

When her heart was full of various emotions, sometimes sad and sweet, sometimes bitter and distressing, the poor sempstress, finding a melancholy charm in these mute and solitary declarations, sometimes in a poetic form, simple and touching, sometimes written in simple prose, had, by degrees, become accustomed not

to place any bounds to the confidence which related to Agricola, although there was at the bottom of all her thoughts certain reflections which were produced in her by the sight of beauty, happy love, maternity, riches, and misfortune, and which were too strongly imbued with her sense of her own personal appearance, so unfortunately unprepossessing to allow of her ever communicating them to Agricola.

Such, then, was the journal of this daughter of the people, mean-looking, deformed, and wretched, but endued with an angelic soul and a bright intelligence, developed by reading, meditation, and solitude, — pages unknown, but which yet contained views clear-sighted and profound as to people and things, taken from that peculiar position in which fate had placed this unfortunate girl.

The following lines, interrupted in places, or blurred by tears, according to the course of emotions which La Mayeux had felt on the previous evening on learning the deep love of Agricola for Angèle, formed the last pages of this journal:

"Friday, March 3, 1832.

"My night had not been disturbed by any painful dream, and I rose this morning without any sad presentiment.

"I was calm, tranquil, when Agricola came.

"He did not appear to me agitated, but was, as he always is, simple and affectionate. He first told me of an event relative to M. Hardy, and then, without change or hesitation, said to me:

"'For the last four days I have been desperately in love; so deep has been the impression that I think of marrying, and I have come to ask your advice about it.'

"It was in these terms that this disclosure, so overwhelming to me, was made, naturally and cordially, as we sat by the fire, I on one side, and Agricola on the

other, as if we were only discoursing of the most commonplace affairs. Yet what more was necessary to break a heart? A person enters your room, embraces you as a brother, sits down, talks with you, and then — oh, Heaven, I shall lose my senses!

"I am calmer again. Courage, courage, poor heart! If some day misfortune shall again crush me, I will again peruse these lines, written under the impression of the most intense grief I ever experienced, and I will say to myself, 'What is this present sorrow to the agony that is past?'

"How cruel is this agony of mine! It is forbidden, ridiculous, shameful. I dare not confess it even to the tenderest, the most indulgent mother.

"Alas, these are fearful miseries, which yet give a right to people to shrug their shoulders with pity or disdain! Alas, these are, indeed, forbidden griefs!

"Agricola has asked me to go to-morrow to see the young girl of whom he is so passionately enamoured, and whom he will wed, if the instinct of my heart advises him to this marriage. This thought is the most agonising of all those which have afflicted me, since he so pitilessly told me of his love.

"Pitilessly! No, Agricola — no, no, my brother, forgive this unjust cry of a suffering heart. Thou dost not know, thou couldst not suppose, that I love thee more earnestly than thou lovest, or ever canst love, this charming creature.

"The shape and figure of a nymph, fair as a lily, with blue eyes as long as that, and almost as soft as yours.

"It was thus he drew her portrait.

"Poor Agricola, how he would have suffered, if he had but known how each word cut me to the soul!

"Never did I feel more poignantly than at this moment the deep commiseration, the tender pity, which a good and affectionate being may inspire you with, whilst,

in his sincere ignorance, he wounds you to death, and smiles at you.

"Thus I blame him not; far from it, I but pity him for all the pain he would experience, should he detect the grief he occasions me.

"How strange! Agricola never appeared to me handsomer than he looked to-day. How his manly face was excited when he mentioned the uneasiness of this young and handsome lady! When I heard him talk of the anguish of a woman who risks her own reputation for the man she loves, I felt my heart palpitate violently, my hands burnt like fire, a soft languor spread over my senses — Absurdity — derision! What right have I — I — to be affected thus?

"I remember that, whilst he was speaking to me, I threw one look at the mirror. I was proud of being so nicely dressed, although he did not notice it; no matter, I thought my cap became me, that my hair looked nicely, and my look was soft. I thought Agricola looked so well that I fancied myself less ugly than usual. No doubt I sought thus to excuse myself in my own eyes for daring to love him.

"After all, what happened to-day must have occurred some day or other.

"Yes (and the thought is consolatory for those who love life), death itself is nothing, inasmuch as it must come, some day or other.

"What has always preserved me from suicide — that last idea of the wretch who prefers going to God to remaining amongst his fellow creatures — has been a sentiment of duty. One should not think only of oneself.

"I said to myself also, 'God is good, always good, since the most forlorn of human beings find some one to love, some one to whom they devote themselves. How has it been that I, so weak and insignificant, have

always been able to be of service and utility to some one?'

"Yet to-day I was sorely tempted to end my life. Neither Agricola nor his mother have any further need of me. Yes, but then those unfortunates of whom Mlle. de Cardoville has made me the helper. My benefactress herself, although she scolded me kindly for the obstinacy of my suspicions of that man, I am more than ever afraid for her, I more than ever feel that she is threatened, more than ever have I faith in the utility of my presence near her.

"I must live, therefore, — live to go to-morrow and see this young girl whom Agricola loves so — so fondly!

"Merciful Heaven! Why has it ever been my lot to experience grief, but never hatred? Methinks there must be a great and bitter delight in being able to hate; it is a passion so easily roused, and so common with many; perhaps I may yet feel it, as regards the object of Agricola's affection, Angèle, as he called her, when he said, 'Is not Angèle a sweet, pretty name, La Mayeux?'

"The idea of mixing up names so dissimilar, — the one expressive of all that is graceful and lovely, the other conveying but the derisive remembrance of my own wretched deformity!

"Poor, dear Agricola, — my beloved brother! Who would believe that affection can sometimes inflict unconscious wounds, as deep and painful as the most premeditated cruelty?

"And wherefore should I wish to hate the fair young creature who has won Agricola's heart? Did she steal from me the beauty which has ensnared him? Alas, no! Then what cause of offence have I against her? Why cherish unkindly feelings because the hand of God has made her beautiful, and me —

"Before I had fully learned all the sad consequences of an appearance as repulsive as mine, I often asked

myself, with bitter curiosity, how it came to pass that an all-wise Creator should have endowed his creatures so differently ?

" A long acquaintance with sorrow has taught me to reflect calmly on many painful subjects, and the result of my meditations is, that I am perfectly persuaded that to both beauty and ugliness are attached two of the finest emotions of the soul, — admiration and compassion.

" Such as myself deeply admire those who are beautiful, like Angèle and Agricola; while such as they look with pity and compassion on poor, afflicted creatures resembling me.

" How frequently it happens that, spite of our better judgment, we entertain vain and senseless hopes! Because Agricola, from motives of propriety, forbore to tell me of his love-affairs, as he now says, I had almost persuaded myself that he had never engaged in any, that his heart had never been touched, or that it was me he loved, and that the fear of ridicule prevented him, equally with myself, from confessing it. Nay, I even carried my folly so far as to write verses on the occasion; and, perhaps, inspired by the happiness the bare idea afforded me, they are the least faulty of anything I have committed to paper.

" How strange is my position! If I love I am an object of ridicule, while the person who should requite my passion would be still more derided.

" How could I have lost sight of that certainty when I allowed myself to endure the agony which wrung my heart, and still tears it, at learning Agricola's intention. Yet I bless God that, amidst all my sufferings, envy, hatred, or malice entered not into my heart. Oh, no, nothing so base shall influence my opinion of the chosen of Agricola, to whom I will act as becomes a faithful and devoted sister, even to the very last. I will only listen to the impartial whisperings of my heart; and if I have that instinctive perception of character Agricola

ascribes to me, it shall be employed to guide and enlighten him.

"My greatest dread is of bursting into tears at the sight of my innocent rival, of being unable to repress the violent struggle I am enduring.

"But, gracious Heaven, what would Agricola think? Would he not read my thoughts, and obtain a full revelation of my blind, my insensate passion?

"Oh, never, never! The hour that discloses to him the fatal secret of my love shall be the last of my life; there would then exist a motive stronger then duty itself why I should cease to exist, — the necessity of escaping from a hopeless, reproachful shame, which would for ever scorch and burn my brain.

"But no, this fearful evil shall not come to pass, — I will be calm. Have I not already undergone tortures in his presence, and was I not calm? Besides, no personal feelings must be allowed to overcloud the second sight, so penetrating and acute, where those I love are concerned.

"Oh, painful, painful task! For may it not happen that the very dread of being influenced by a wrong feeling in judging of Angèle may make me too indulgent in my estimate of her? And should I not, in that case, perhaps, involve the future happiness of Agricola, who leaves the sole decision in my hands?

"What a poor, weak creature I am! How easily I deceive myself! Agricola only asks my opinion because he wishes to flatter my self-pride; and also because he feels sure I could not have the painful resolution to oppose his passion. Or else, should my advice be contrary to what he desires, he will only say, 'No matter, I love Angèle, and I will take my chance of the future.'

"Still, if my advice and the instinct of my heart are powerless to guide him, wherefore should he have come hither to engage me to enter upon a mission so cruel as that of to-morrow?

"Wherefore? To afford me an opportunity of obeying his slightest wish. He has said, 'Come!' and shall I not fly to do his bidding?

"While alluding to my devotion to his request, I can but think how often have I asked the most secret recesses of my heart whether it could be possible that he might ever have thought of loving me otherwise than as a sister, if he had for a moment reflected upon the devotedness of my affection were I his wife.

"Yet what need of such a question? Have I not ever been — and shall I not still continue — as devoted to him as though it had pleased God to have made me his wife, his sister, or mother? Why should it ever have occurred to him to think of such a thing? We have no occasion to wish for that we already possess.

"Married to Agricola? I his wife? Merciful God, what a delusive, yet enchanting dream! What sweet, what blissful ideas of joy, too great for expression, does it not contain! But are not these delicious images of earthly happiness as ill-suited and unfitted for me to entertain, as though I sought to clothe this poor, misshapen body in all the seductive adornments only the lovely and the favoured may wear?

"I would fain know whether, when struggling beneath the accumulation of every distress, I should have suffered more than I now endure in learning the projected marriage of Agricola; would cold, hunger, and misery have rendered me less susceptible of the agony I now feel? Or would the intensity of my anguish have made me unmindful of the pangs of hunger, cold, and wretchedness?

"But this bitter and ironical strain is both sinful and unbecoming in me. And wherefore should I grieve so deeply? In what respect have the esteem, affection, or brotherly consideration of Agricola altered as far as I am concerned? I complain; but how much greater would be my sufferings if, as is often the case, I had been beautiful, loving, and devoted, and he had still

preferred to me one my inferior in each of those respects? Should I not, then, be a thousand times more deserving of pity? For I both could and ought to blame him; whilst at present it is impossible for me to feel displeased at his never having thought of a union as ridiculous as impossible.

"And even had he wished it, could I, for a moment, have been selfish enough to encourage such an idea?

"Many pages in this journal have been begun like this, — that is to say, under the influence of a grief too great for words to describe, — and yet almost always as I committed to paper words, I would have died ere I could have uttered them, my feelings became calm, and sweet and holy resignation came to my aid, smiling with gentle patience, and pointing upwards as my future reward. And so I resign myself, hopeless, yet loving, even till my heart is cold and motionless."

The journal ended here, yet it was abundantly evident, by the frequent traces of tears on the paper, how bitter had been the sufferings of the writer. In truth, worn out by so many emotions, towards morning La Mayeux had replaced the journal behind the pasteboard covering from which she had taken it, not imagining it to be in greater security there than elsewhere, — for who could she possibly believe in such a house capable of the smallest abuse of confidence? — but that it might be less exposed to view than if kept in one of the drawers she was in the constant habit of opening before any person.

In pursuance of her resolution, worthily to perform her duty to the end, the courageous and noble-hearted girl had awaited the coming of Agricola, and, in company with the young smith, had departed for the manufactory of M. Hardy.

Florine, — aware of the absence of La Mayeux, but detained for a considerable portion of the day by her duties to Mlle. de Cardoville, and preferring, likewise,

to wait till night ere she executed the fresh orders she had requested and received since her letter giving an account of the finding of La Mayeux's journal, with the nature of its contents, — certain of not being disturbed, waited till night had set in, and then, taking a candle in her hand, proceeded to the apartment of the young sempstress.

Acquainted with the exact spot where the manuscript was deposited, she went at once to the desk, took out the pasteboard box, then drawing from her pocket a sealed letter, she prepared to substitute it for the manuscript she had taken away.

At that moment she trembled so violently as to be obliged to hold by the table for support. As has already been said, all good feeling was not extinct in the mind of Florine. She obeyed the orders given her, but she deeply felt all the ignominy and treachery of her conduct. Had it been only herself who was concerned, there is little doubt but she would have had the courage to brave everything rather than exist under so disgraceful a subjection. But, unhappily, it was not so; and her disgrace would have carried a mortal blow to one she loved far better than her own life. She, therefore, resigned herself, though not without severe struggles, to play the base and infamous part allotted her.

Although nearly always ignorant of the purpose for which she acted, and still more so as to the reason of her being employed to abstract La Mayeux's journal, she vaguely foresaw that the removal of the manuscript and the substitution of the letter were fraught with the most direful consequences to the poor girl; for she had not forgotten those ill-omened words uttered by Rodin the day preceding, "We must get rid of La Mayeux to-morrow!"

What could he have meant by those words? And in what way could the letter he had commanded her to place in the room of the manuscript effect that purpose?

She knew not; but of one thing she was aware, that the devotion and clear-sightedness of La Mayeux caused a well-founded uneasiness and mistrust to the enemies of Mlle. de Cardoville; and even she herself, Florine, ran the risk of being one day or other discovered in her treacheries by the acute and penetrating vigilance of the young needlewoman.

This last apprehension put an end to the scruples of Florine, who, putting the letter where the journal had been, replaced the pasteboard case, and then, concealing the manuscript under her apron, stole cautiously from the chamber of poor La Mayeux.

CHAPTER XVI.

LA MAYEUX'S JOURNAL.

Florine, who had returned into her chamber some hours after she had hidden there the manuscript she had abstracted from La Mayeux's apartment, giving way to her curiosity, was resolved to look through it.

She soon felt an increasing interest, an involuntary emotion, in reading those intimate thoughts and reflections of the young work-girl.

Amongst several pieces of poetry, all of which breathed a passionate love for Agricola, — a love so deep, so unalloyed, and so sincere that Florine was touched by them, and forgot the deformity which exposed the poor Mayeux to so much ridicule, — amongst several pieces of poetry were various fragments, thoughts, or narratives relating to various subjects. We will quote a few, in order to justify the profound impression which their reading excited in Florine's mind.

FRAGMENTS OF LA MAYEUX'S JOURNAL.

"To-day was my birthday. Up to this evening I had clung to a foolish hope.

"Yesterday I had gone down into Madame Baudoin's room to dress a small wound she had in her leg. When I went in Agricola was there; I am certain he was talking to his mother of me, for they were silent directly, and exchanged a very significant smile. I then observed, as I passed the chest of drawers, a very pretty cardboard box, with a pincushion on the lid. I felt myself blush at

the happiness I felt, for I thought this little present was intended for me, but I pretended not to see anything. Whilst I was on my knees by his mother, Agricola went out, and I observed he took the pretty box with him. Madame Baudoin was never more kind and motherly to me than she was that evening. I thought she went to bed earlier than usual this evening. It was that I might leave her earlier, I thought, so that I might the sooner enjoy the surprise that Agricola had in store for me.

"Oh, how my heart beat as I went up-stairs as quickly as I could to my room! I even remained for a moment without opening the door, in order that my happiness might last the longer.

"At length I went in, my two eyes bathed in tears of joy. I looked on my table — on my chair — on my bed — there was nothing — the little box was not there. My heart was chilled, and I said to myself, 'It will be to-morrow, for to-day is only the eve of my birthday.'

"The day passed — the evening has come — nothing! The pretty box was not for me. There was a pincushion on the lid, — it could only be for a female. To whom could Agricola have given it?

"How I am pained at this moment!

"The idea I indulged in that Agricola would thus congratulate me on my birthday was silly; I am ashamed to confess it, even to myself. But that would have proved to me that he had not forgotten that I have another name besides that of La Mayeux, by which I am always called. My susceptibility on this point is so distressing, so intense, that it is impossible for me not to experience a moment of shame and chagrin whenever I am thus called La Mayeux; and yet from my infancy I have never had any other name.

"That is the reason why I should have been so happy if Agricola had availed himself of the occasion of my birthday to call me once by my unpretending name — Madeleine.

"Happily he will for ever remain in ignorance of this wish and this regret."

Florine, more and more moved at the perusal of this page of such painful simplicity, turned over several leaves, and continued:

"I have just attended the funeral of poor little Victoire Herbin, our neighbour. Her father, a carpet-maker, has been working by the month, a long way from Paris. She died at nineteen years of age, without a single relative near her. Her last moments were not painful, and the worthy woman who watched her to the last moment said to us that she had said nothing but these words:

"'At last! At last!'

"And that, as with so much satisfaction, the nurse added.

"Poor, dear girl! she had become so wasted! At fifteen years old she was like a rosebud, and so pretty, so fresh, her chestnut hair as soft as silk. But by degrees she pined away. Her business, as a comber of wool mattresses, killed her. She had been, as they say, for a long time poisoned by the effluvia from the wool; and her occupation was the more unwholesome and dangerous as she worked for poor houses, where the bedding is usually made up of refuse.[1]

[1] We read in the *Ruche Populaire* (the *Public Hive*), an excellent compilation, edited by a body of workmen, and of which we have already spoken:

"MATTRESS-COMBERS.—The dust which escapes from the wool renders combing an occupation very injurious to the health, and the mischief of which is the more increased by the frauds of trade. When a sheep is killed, the neck of the wool is dyed in blood, and it must be made white again in order to sell it. For this purpose it is dipped in lime, which, after having effected the bleaching, partly remains. Then it is the workwoman who suffers, for when she is at her work the lime becomes detached in the form of dust and is drawn into the lungs by the inspiration; it frequently causes cramps in the stomach and vomitings, which bring on a wretched state of health. The greater part of the carders give up the employment, and those who still persist in it have, at least, a catarrh or asthma, which ends in death.

"Then there is the hair, of which even the dearest, that which is called the sample, is not even pure. We may judge by this what must be the commonest sort which the workwomen call the vitriol hair; which consists of the refuse of goat's hair, deer's hair, and the finer bristles, which are first dipped in vitriol, then into dye, to burn and disguise the foreign particles; such as straw, thorns, and even morsels of flesh, which can scarcely be cleared away, and which are frequently met with in working this hair, and whence flies out a dust, which is as noisome as the lime which comes from the wool."

"She had the courage of a lion, and the resignation of an angel, and always said to me, in her small, soft voice, interrupted at times by her short, dry cough, 'I cannot last long, going on as I do, breathing vitriol-powder and lime all day long; I vomit blood, and have sometimes such cramps in my stomach that I faint away with it.'

"'Try another employment,' I said to her.

"'What time have I to learn any other?' she replied; 'and if I could, it is now too late. I am affected, that I feel; it was not my fault,' added the poor girl; 'I did not choose my occupation, — it was my father who chose it. Fortunately, he has no need of me; and when one is dead there is no more trouble — no more fear of want of work.'

"Victoire made this commonplace remark with great sincerity and a kind of satisfaction; and now she is dead, saying, 'At last! At last!'

"Still it is very painful to reflect that the labour which the poor person is compelled to follow, in order to get bread, is often nothing more than a protracted suicide!

"I said so to Agricola the other day, and he replied that there were many other deadly occupations. The workmen employed in making aqua fortis, white lead, and minium, or red paint, amongst others, are attacked by the usual and incurable complaints of which they die.

"'Do you know,' added Agricola, 'do you know that they say, when they are going to their destructive factories, "We are going to the slaughter-house?"'

"This word was so fearfully true that I shuddered. 'And this occurs in our time!' I said, with sorrow; 'all this is publicly known. Amongst so many powerful and great persons does not one think of the mortality which thus decimates his fellows, compelled thus to eat bread that destroys them?'

"'Why, Mayeux, my dear,' replied Agricola, 'whilst it is a question to enlist the people to have them slain in war, there is not much thought about them; and as to

the question of organising things so as to preserve their lives, no one thinks of that but my employer, M. Hardy. And people say, "Bah! the hunger, misery, or suffering of the working classes, what are they? That is not a question of politics." They are deceived,' added Agricola, 'it is more than a question of politics.'

"As Victoire did not leave enough to pay for a church service, there was only the presenting of the body under the porch; for there is not even a simple death-mass for the poor; and then, as we could not give eighteen francs to the curé, no priest accompanied the pauper car to the common ground for burials.

"If funeral ceremonies thus shortened, unattended, cut down, are sufficient in a religious point of view, why devise any other? Is it from cupidity? If these are, on the other hand, inadequate, why make the indigent the sole victim of such inadequacy?

"What is the utility of troubling ourselves with the pomps, the incense, and the singing, of which persons appear to be more or less prodigal or sparing? What's their use? What's their use? They are but vain and terrestrial things, and of these the soul has no further desire, when, glorious, it returns to the hands of Him who gave it.

"Yesterday Agricola made me read an article in a newspaper in which, by turns, great blame and bitter and disdainful irony were employed to assail what was called the pernicious tendency of certain of the people to instruct themselves, to write, read poetry, and sometimes compose verses.

"Rational enjoyments are interdicted to us by our poverty. Is it humane to reproach us with endeavouring to acquire the enjoyments of the mind?

"What ill can result, if, every evening, after a hard day's labour, cut off from every other pleasure or amusement, I please myself, unknown to others, in putting cer-

tain verses together, or in writing in this journal the impressions, good or bad, which I have felt?

"Is Agricola a worse workman because, when he returns home to his mother, he employs his Sunday in composing one of those popular songs which elevate the labours of the artisan, and which say to all, Hope and Brotherhood? Is not this a more proper use of his time than if he passed it in the public-house?

"Ah, those who blame us for these innocent and noble diversions from our painful toils and ills, are deceived when they suppose that, in proportion as the intelligence spreads and refines itself, we support more impatiently our privations and misery, and that our irritation is the more increased against the happy of this world.

"Even admitting that it were so, although it is not so, would it not be better to have an informed and enlightened opponent, whose reason and feeling could be appealed to, than an ignorant, brutal, and implacable enemy?

"But no, on the contrary, hatreds are effaced in proportion as the mind is developed, as the horizon of fellow feeling is widened. We can thus comprehend moral griefs; and then we see that the rich, too, frequently have deep sufferings, and that the similarity of misfortune creates a common bond of sympathy.

"Alas! they, too, lose, and bitterly bewail, idolised children, beloved wives, adored parents, — they, too, especially the females, in the midst of luxury and splendour, often have broken hearts, suffering spirits, and many bitter tears shed in secret.

"Let them have no fears on this point.

"By becoming informed and their equals in understanding, the people learn to pity the rich if they are unfortunate and good, and to pity them still more if they are fortunate and wicked.

"What happiness! What a day of delight! I hardly know how to contain my joy. Oh, yes, man is good,

humane, charitable! Oh, yes, the Creator has implanted in him all generous instincts, and, unless he be a monstrous exception, he never does ill voluntarily.

"I saw what follows just now, — I do not wait until evening to write it, for delay (if I may say so) would chill my heart.

"I was going along with some work required in great haste, and, passing along the Place du Temple, a few steps before me I saw a child not more than twelve years of age, with bare head and feet, in spite of the cold, clad only in a pair of trousers and a smock-frock all in rags, leading by the bridle a large, fat cart-horse, not drawing, but still having his harness on. From time to time the horse stopped and refused to stir, and the child, not having a whip to make him go on, in vain tugged at the rein; the horse remained stock-still. Then the poor little fellow exclaimed, 'Oh, dear, oh, dear!' and cried bitterly, whilst he looked around him to ask assistance from some of the passers-by.

"His dear little face expressed such great affliction that, without reflecting, I attempted a thing which I cannot now think of without smiling, for I must have appeared very odd indeed.

"I have a horrible fear of horses, and still greater dread of making myself conspicuous, but I did not think of either, but armed myself with courage. I had an umbrella in my hand, and, going up to the horse, with the energy of an ant which seeks to shake a large stone with a morsel of straw, I gave him, with all my might, a blow with my umbrella on his hind quarters.

"'Ah, thank you, my good lady!' cried the child, drying his tears; 'give him another blow, if you please, and perhaps he will go on!'

"I redoubled my blow with great heroism, but the horse, either from ill-temper or idleness, bent his knees, laid down, and rolled on the stones; and in so doing, finding himself encumbered with his harness, he broke

it, and completely smashed his large wooden collar. I had moved away as quickly as I could, for fear of being kicked. The child, at the sight of this fresh disaster, threw himself on his knees in the middle of the street, and, clasping his hands, he sobbed out in a voice of agony, 'Help, help!'

"The cry was heard, several of the passers-by came around, and a beating much more effectual than mine was administered to the restive brute, who got up,—but in such a condition, without his harness!

"'My master will beat me,' cried the poor child with renewed sobs; 'I am two hours behind my time, for the horse would not move on, and now only see his broken harness! My master will beat me and turn me away, and then what will become of me, for I have no father or mother?'

"At these words, uttered with a voice of despair, a worthy shopkeeper of the Temple, who was looking on, said, with a sympathising voice:

"'No father nor mother! Come, don't be down-hearted, my poor boy; there are ways and means in the Temple, and we can mend your harness, and, if my gossips are of my mind, you sha'n't go any more with bare head and feet in such weather as this.'

"Her speech was hailed with acclamation, and they led the child and horse away, and, whilst some were engaged in repairing the harness, one shopkeeper gave him a cap, another a pair of stockings, another a pair of shoes, another a good waistcoat, and in a quarter of an hour the boy was warmly clad, the harness repaired, and a tall lad of eighteen with a whip, which he smacked about the ears of the horse as a sort of warning, said to the child, who was looking at his clothes and the shop-keepers as if he thought himself the hero of a fairy tale:

"'Where does your master live, my boy?'

"'Quay of the Canal St. Martin, sir,' was the reply, in a voice broken and trembling with emotion.

"'Well, then,' added the young man, 'I will assist you in leading your horse, who will go well enough with me, and I will tell your master that the delay is not your fault. They ought not to trust a restive horse with a child so young as you.'

"As they were going away the poor little fellow said in a timid voice to the shopkeeper, taking off his hat:

"'Madame, will you let me kiss you?'

"And tears of gratitude filled his eyes. The boy had a good heart.

"This scene of public charity moved me most delightfully, and I followed with my eyes, as long as I could, the young man and the child, who could now scarcely keep up with the horse, who had so speedily become obedient from fear of the whip. Well, I repeat it with pride, the creature is naturally good, and full of pity; nothing could be more spontaneous than this movement of pity and tenderness in this assembly of persons, when the poor boy exclaimed, 'What will become of me, I have neither father nor mother?'

"Unhappy child! Yes, no father nor mother, said I to myself, belonging to a brutish master, who scarcely clothes him with miserable rags, and maltreats him — lying down, no doubt, in some corner of a stable. Poor child! He is still gentle and good in spite of misery and misfortune. I saw very plainly that he was more grateful than rejoiced at the kindness done to him; but perhaps this good disposition, abandoned, without support, without advice, without aid, rendered rough by ill-treatment, will change and become fierce, exasperated; then will come the age of passions, then bad excitements!

"Ah, with the neglected outcast poor, virtue is doubly holy and to be respected!

"This morning, after having, as usual, gently scolded me for not going to mass, Agricola's mother said to

me, and it was so touching from the mouth of her so devoutly a believer:

"'Fortunately, I pray more for you than myself, my poor dear Mayeux; the good God will hear me, and you will, I hope, only go into purgatory.'

"Good soul! Worthy creature! She said these words with so much kindness, so full of earnestness, with a belief so fervent in the happy result of her pious intervention, that I felt my eyes grow moist, and I threw myself around her neck as sincerely and seriously grateful as if I believed in purgatory.

"This has been a fortunate day for me; I think I shall find work; and I owe this good fortune to a young woman full of kind feeling and good heart. She is to take me to-morrow to the convent of Ste. Marie, where she thinks she can find employment for me."

Florine, already deeply affected by the perusal of this journal, started at this passage in which La Mayeux spoke of her, and continued:

"I shall never forget the deep interest, the delicate benevolence, with which this young person received me, — me so poor and wretched. That does not astonish me at all, for she was in Mlle. de Cardoville's service. She is worthy to be about the person of Agricola's benefactress. It will be always pleasant and delightful to me to recall her name, which is as pretty and becoming as her countenance, — it is Florine. I am nothing, I possess nothing; but, if the fervent wishes of a heart deeply impressed with gratitude be heard, Mlle. Florine will be happy, very happy.

"Alas! I am reduced to offer up nothing but wishes for her — nothing else have I — and I can do nothing but recollect and love her."

These lines, which so simply spake the real gratitude of La Mayeux, gave the last blow to Florine's hesitation.

She could not any longer resist the generous temptation which assailed her.

As she had continued the perusal of the various fragments of the journal, her affection and her respect for La Mayeux had increased, and she felt more acutely than ever how infamous it was to surrender, perhaps to sarcasm and bitter disdain, the most secret thoughts of the poor girl. Fortunately good is often as contagious as evil. Purified by all she had read, having strengthened her failing virtue in this vivifying and pure source, Florine, yielding at last to one of those good impulses which sometimes controlled her, left her apartment, taking the manuscript with her, and quite resolved, if La Mayeux had not returned, to return it to the place whence she had taken it, making up her mind to tell Rodin that the second time her search after the journal had been useless, La Mayeux having doubtless detected the first attempt to abstract it.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DISCOVERY.

In the interval which had preceded Florine's resolution to repair her unworthy abuse of confidence, La Mayeux, after a faithful discharge of her painful duty, had returned from visiting the manufactory. Equally struck with Agricola, by the innocent beauty, engaging simplicity, good sense, and sweetness of character exhibited by Angèle, La Mayeux, after a most close and careful scrutiny, had, with magnanimous sincerity, advised the young smith to lose no time in seeking to obtain her affections. The following scene was enacted ere Florine, having finished perusing the manuscript so surreptitiously obtained, had brought herself to the praiseworthy intentions of returning it.

It was ten o'clock in the evening, and La Mayeux, just returned to the Hôtel de Cardoville, had gone into her chamber, and, exhausted by the severe mental conflict she had undergone for so many hours, thrown herself into an armchair. The utmost silence reigned throughout the house, only interrupted by the violence of the wind, as it swayed and shook the trees in the garden. A single light burned in the chamber, the hangings of which were of dark green, whose sombre tints, added to the black dress she wore, served still more to display the more than ordinary paleness of La Mayeux.

Seated beside the fire, her head drooping on her breast, her hands clasped on her knees, the mild, yet melancholy

and resigned, countenance of the poor sempstress bore that look of unutterable sweetness arising from the consciousness of duties well performed.

Like all those whom a long acquaintance with misfortune has accustomed to bear their griefs without exaggeration or display, in fact to receive sorrow as too habitual a visitor to require any parade, La Mayeux was incapable of long indulging in vain and fruitless regrets for what was now irrevocably decided. The blow had been fearfully sudden and painful, and would doubtless long rankle in the heart of the unhappy being on whom it had so unexpectedly descended; but there was equal probability of its becoming one of those chronic sorrows, which formed the part and parcel of her ill-starred existence. And still the noble-minded being, thus writhing in her agony, yet scarcely accusing her severe destiny, found sources of consolation even amidst her present distress; her tender, affectionate nature had been sensitively alive to the demonstrations of regard bestowed on her by her happy rival, Angèle; and her heart swelled with the proudest satisfaction at witnessing the blind confidence with which Agricola awaited her decision respecting his mistress, and the unbounded joy with which he listened to her prognostics of the future happiness that would result from the marriage he so ardently desired.

"And besides," argued La Mayeux, mentally, "at least I shall no more be disturbed (even in spite of my better judgment) by false hopes only, but by suppositions as absurd as unfounded. The marriage of Agricola will put an end to all the wild fancies of my poor brain."

And, last of all, La Mayeux experienced the greatest possible delight in having passed thus firmly and well over the severe trial she had just undergone, as well as for the effectual concealment of her love for Agricola; for the reader has already been told how surpassingly great was the shuddering horror felt by the poor girl at

the idea of the ridicule she felt perfectly convinced must follow the discovery of her insensate passion.

After remaining long absorbed in her deep reverie, La Mayeux arose and walked slowly towards her desk.

"My only recompense for all I have endured," said she, as she prepared her writing materials, "will be to confide this last new and terrible grief to the sad and silent witness of all my sorrows. I shall, at least, have kept the engagement entered into with myself; for believing, from the bottom of my heart, that the object selected by Agricola is calculated to secure his happiness, I have delivered to him my conscientious advice to marry; so when, perhaps in years to come, I shall read over what I have here written, I may possibly find a compensation for my present sufferings."

So saying, La Mayeux drew out the pasteboard box; a cry of astonishment escaped her at the absence of her journal, but this was quickly turned to fear when she perceived in its place a letter addressed to herself.

The features of the poor girl became of the livid hue of death, her knees trembled, and a faintness like that of death stole over her; but gaining power and energy, even from the excess of her terror, she exerted herself sufficiently to break the seal of the mysterious epistle.

As she did so, a note for five hundred francs (20*l.*) fell from the paper on the table, while the eager eye of La Mayeux read the following lines:

"*Mademoiselle:* — The account given by you in your journal of your love for Agricola is at once so amusing as well as original that I cannot deny myself the pleasure of acquainting him with the violent passion he has excited, a fact of which he is far from dreaming; but once known to him, he will of course hasten to return. Advantage will be taken of the present opportunity to admit a number of persons to share in the amusement derivable from the perusal of your love-stricken journal, and of

which they would otherwise have been deprived. Should written copies and extracts be insufficient to gratify general curiosity, printed specimens will be distributed among all who desire them. It would, indeed, be the height of selfishness to keep so fine a treat of the sublime and beautiful to ourselves. Your readers will doubtless be differently affected by your love-lorn effusions; some they will move to laughter, others perhaps to tears; for what may strike some class of persons as touchingly pathetic, will cause inextinguishable laughter and merriment in others, — 'many men, many minds.' But one thing is quite certain, your journal will be the town talk for a time at least, to that I pledge myself. As a person of your very singular ideas may prefer getting out of the way of your triumph, and as you possessed nothing but the rags upon your back when you were admitted, out of charity, into the house where now you seek to rule and govern, giving yourself all manner of insolent and unbecoming airs, ill-suited to one of your appearance as well as pretentions, you are presented with the sum of five hundred francs to pay for the paper used in your love-sick journal, and in order that you may not be quite destitute in the event of your being sufficiently modest to dread the many congratulations with which, by to-morrow, you will be overwhelmed; for of this you may be quite sure, that at the very moment of your reading this, your journal will be in rapid circulation.

"One like yourself,

"A Real Mayeux."

The coarse and insolent tone of mockery displayed in this letter, which was designedly written as though coming from some servant of the house, jealous of the introduction of La Mayeux into the establishment, had been calculated with fiendish skilfulness as sure to produce all the effect desired.

"Gracious God!" were the only words that fell from

the ashy lips of the wretched girl during her first stupor and affright.

If the reader will recall the passionate tenderness with which the unfortunate Mayeux had revealed her love for her adopted brother; the many passages in her journal in which she speaks of the numerous wounds Agricola had unconsciously inflicted on her; and, lastly, her intense horror and dread of ridicule, he may be able to form some idea of her overwhelming shame and utter despair after the perusal of this infamous epistle.

The heart-broken girl thought not for an instant of the noble sentiments, the touching incidents, also recorded in the same journal; the one idea which filled her half distracted brain was, that the following day, not only Agricola himself, and Mlle. de Cardoville, but an insolent and mocking crowd of others, would also be aware of her ridiculous passion, and would pitilessly laugh her to scorn.

So stunning, so unexpected was this blow, that for a time La Mayeux staggered under its violence, and for several minutes she remained mute, passive, and crushed in mind and body; but at length the bitter conviction rose to her mind that a fearful necessity required immediate exertion, — she must lose no time in quitting for ever the hospitable roof which had received and sheltered her after so many misfortunes. The extreme timidity, the sensitive delicacy of the poor girl would not permit her to remain an instant longer in a dwelling where the innermost secrets of her heart had thus been surprised, profaned, and, doubtless, given up to scorn and derision.

She dreamed not of seeking justice or vengeance at the hands of Mlle. de Cardoville; to excite anger and create disturbance in the house, at the very moment she was quitting it, would have been considered by her as ungrateful and disrespectful towards her benefactress. To her it mattered not what motive could have led to the abstraction of her journal, or who had penned the

insulting letter left in its place. Alas! what could a knowledge of either circumstance have availed her, fully determined as she was to fly from the humiliations with which she was threatened?

As had been hoped for, a vague notion took possession of her mind, that her misery was brought about by some menial jealous of the kindness and consideration bestowed on her by Mlle. de Cardoville. Thus, then, the poor girl thought, with despairing agony, that those pages, so painfully confidential, describing feelings she would not have dared breathe in the ear of the most tender and indulgent mother, because written in a manner with the blood of her deepest wounds, too faithfully portrayed, too cruelly described, the writhings of her stricken heart. Yet these very transcripts of her secret sorrows would serve to amuse, nay, perhaps were even now exciting the jeers and vulgar jests of the servants of the hôtel.

The money accompanying this letter, and the insulting manner in which it was offered, served still further to confirm her suspicions as to the source of her present affliction. No doubt the sender feared that a dread of poverty might prevent her from quitting the house. The determination of La Mayeux was taken with that calm and decided resignation so habitual with her. She rose, her eyes sparkling with unnatural brilliancy, while not a tear moistened her pale and haggard cheeks. Alas! the unfortunate girl had shed so many within the last twenty-four hours that the source seemed dried up. With a cold and trembling hand, she hastily wrote the following lines on a slip of paper, which she left beside the bank-note for five hundred francs:

"May Mlle. de Cardoville be recompensed as she deserves for her great goodness to me, and may she add to that kindness by pardoning my abrupt departure from a house I can remain in no longer."

This done, La Mayeux cast into the fire the infamous letter, which seemed to scorch her hands as it passed through them. Then casting a last glance at her chamber, furnished almost luxuriously, she shuddered with involuntary dread as she thought of the misery which awaited her, — of the distress, exceeding all she had ever experienced, even amidst her many trials; for the mother of Agricola had departed with Gabriel. The unfortunate girl could no longer depend upon the almost maternal tenderness and sympathy of the wife of Dagobert.

A lonely, solitary life, embittered by the undying agony of believing that her fatal love was the jest, the derision of all, perhaps of Agricola himself, was all the prospect the future offered to the poor trembling creature, who now prepared to wander forth she knew not whither. But from such a vista of endless wretchedness her very soul recoiled. Then a dark thought suggested itself to her mind; a tremor passed over her, while a smile of bitter exultation played over her pallid features.

Fully resolved to depart without delay, she proceeded towards the door, but, in passing the fireplace, she saw herself reflected in the glass placed over the chimney, her deathlike countenance contrasting strongly with the black dress she wore. Then, for the first time, she remembered that she had no claim to the clothes she wore; and again she remembered the passage in the letter, reminding her of the ragged garments she wore when she first entered that house.

"It is well I thought of it," cried she, in tones of anguish and a smile of bitterness, as she looked at her black dress, "I might have been accused of stealing."

So saying, the young girl, carrying her candle with her, entered her dressing-room, and resumed the miserable garments she had carefully preserved as a sort of pious remembrance of her past misfortunes.

At this moment the tears of La Mayeux broke forth afresh, and she wept long and abundantly. They flowed not at seeing herself thus again clad in the livery of poverty and misery, but from the plenitude of her gratitude; for all these comforts to which she now bade an eternal adieu recalled vividly to her mind the considerate kindness and delicate attention of Mlle. de Cardoville, and yielding to an almost involuntary burst of feeling, she threw herself (as soon as dressed in her former wretched attire) on her knees, in the midst of her chamber, and, mentally apostrophising, —

"Mlle. de Cardoville!" she exclaimed, in a voice broken by convulsive sobs, "farewell for ever! Farewell, kind, generous lady, who deigned to honour me with favours above my utmost endeavours to deserve, and who honoured me even by the appellation of friend! — sister!"

In sudden terror the poor Mayeux rose from her kneeling attitude; she heard some one stealthily approaching by the passage which led from the garden to one of the doors of her apartment, the other door opening upon the salon.

The steps were those of Florine, who (unfortunately too late) was returning with the manuscripts. Alarmed and driven to desperation by the sound of footsteps, which, she believed, came but to proclaim her the scorn and ridicule of the house, La Mayeux rushed from the salon, and, quickly flying through the anteroom, reached the courtyard, tapped with frenzied eagerness against the windows of the porter's lodge, and, as soon as the gate was opened, darted into the street.

The door closed after her, and La Mayeux ceased to be within the cherished precincts of the Hôtel de Cardoville.

Thus was Adrienne deprived of a faithful, vigilant, and devoted guardian, while Rodin was likewise freed

from an active, penetrating antagonist, whom he had always, and with just cause, dreaded.

Having (as has been seen) divined the love entertained by the poor sempstress for Agricola; knowing also of her skill in poesy, and arguing therefrom that she would thus in secret pour forth her fatal and concealed passion, he had instructed Florine to search diligently for some written testimonies of this ill-starred affection. From the success attending this manœuvre arose the coarse and galling epistle, calculating to goad on a mind so sensitively alive as La Mayeux's to the most desperate measures. Of the contents of this epistle, it is but justice to Florine to say she was entirely ignorant, having merely received it in reply to her account of the contents of the journal, which she had, in the first instance, merely glanced over without allowing herself to remove it.

As we have already said, Florine, influenced by a too tardy repentance, only reached the chamber of La Mayeux at the moment when the latter was flying in wild despair from the hôtel.

Perceiving a light in the dressing-closet, Florine hastened thither. On a chair was thrown the black dress just taken off by La Mayeux, while, at a little distance, stood the old trunk in which the poor girl had hitherto religiously preserved her wretched attire of former days; the box was now open and empty.

Heart-stricken by this sight, Florine proceeded to the desk. The disorder in which the various articles were left, the bank-note of five hundred francs, beside which lay the few lines addressed to Mlle. de Cardoville, proved but too clearly the fatal consequences of her obedience to the orders of Rodin, and that the unhappy victim of his persecutions had quitted the house for ever.

Perceiving the utter uselessness of any further attempt, and acknowledging, with a sigh, that her repentance

had come too late to save the unfortunate girl, Florine resigned herself to the necessity of forwarding the manuscript to Rodin. Then, obliged to console herself for the evil she had wrought by fresh arguments of evil, she remembered that the absence of La Mayeux would diminish the chances of discovering her treachery, and render her disgraceful task less hazardous and dangerous.

The day following these events Adrienne received the following note from Rodin, in reply to one which she had written relative to the inexplicable departure of La Mayeux:

"*My dear Young Lady:* — Being obliged to proceed directly to the manufactory of the worthy M. Hardy, whither I am summoned on a most important affair, I am utterly unable to wait upon you and offer my most humble respects. You ask me, 'What am I to think of the sudden disappearance of the young girl I lately took into my house?' In truth, the question is beyond my power to answer; let us hope that future events may explain it to her credit, nay, I feel persuaded it will be so. Only remember what I said to you at Doctor Baleinier's, touching a certain society, and the numerous and secret emissaries it employs to surround perfidiously the persons whom it is requisite to put under a system of espionage.

"I accuse no one, but let us simply recall facts. I have been accused and stigmatised by this very girl, yet your own knowledge and experience assure you, you have not a more faithful or devoted servant than myself.

"She was utterly penniless when you received her, yet in her desk is found the sum of five hundred francs! You have loaded her with benefits, yet she quits your roof without a word, or the smallest endeavour to explain the cause of her unjustifiable flight.

"Still, my dear young lady, I draw no conclusions; I abhor the very idea of condemning unheard. But reflect seriously, and, above all, be well upon your guard, —you have possibly escaped some great danger. To redouble your circumspection, and increase your watchful mistrust of all around you, is the respectful advice of your very humble and most obedient servant,

"RODIN."

Part VIII.
THE FACTORY

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GATHERING OF THE "LOUPS."

It was Sunday morning. It was on the same day that Mlle. de Cardoville had received Rodin's letter relative to the disappearance of La Mayeux.

Two men were conversing at a table in one of the public-houses in the small village of Villiers, situated at a short distance from M. Hardy's factory.

This village was generally inhabited by workmen at the quarries and stone-cutters employed in working the neighbouring stone-pits. Nothing can be more severe, more exhausting, and worse paid than the labours of these artisans; and thus, as Agricola had told La Mayeux, they established a painful comparison between their lot, miserable as it was, and the almost incredible ease and comfort which the workmen of M. Hardy had, thanks to his generous and sagacious management, as well as the principles of association and companionship which he had established amongst them.

Misfortune and ignorance always originate great evils. Misfortune is easily soured, and ignorance but too often gives way to noxious counsels; and for a long time the good fortune of the workmen of M. Hardy had been naturally envied, but not as yet affected by jealousy or hatred. Soon, however, the secret enemies of this manufacturer, set on by M. Tripeaud, his rival, had their own objects in altering this peaceable state of things, and they were changed.

With diabolical pertinacity, and similar address, they

contrived to excite the worst passions. They commenced, by chosen emissaries, by getting hold of certain quarriers and stone-cutters of the neighbourhood, whose irregular lives had aggravated their miseries. Notoriously known by their turbulence, bold and active, these men exercised a dangerous influence over their peaceable, hard-working, well-disposed companions, but who were easily intimidated by violence. These dangerous ringleaders, already soured by misfortune, had their jealous hatred excited and fomented by pointing out to them the comfort and consideration enjoyed by M. Hardy's workmen. They went further. The inflammatory preachings of an abbé, a member of the Order, who, coming from Paris expressly to preach during Lent against M. Hardy, had had immense influence over these workmen's wives, who, whilst their husbands were at the public-house, hastened to hear the sermon. Taking advantage of the growing alarms of the approach of the cholera, their weak and credulous imaginations were struck with terror when pointing to the factory of M. Hardy as a focus of corruption and damnation capable of drawing down the vengeance of Heaven, and, consequently, this avenging scourge on the district. The men, already bitterly envious, were, moreover, constantly worked upon by their wives, who, excited by the abbé's preaching, raved and uttered maledictions against this stronghold of atheists, who would be sure to draw down such miseries on their country.

Some evil-disposed individuals belonging to the workshops of Baron Tripeaud, and bribed by him (we have before alluded to the interest which this honourable person had in M. Hardy's ruin), had increased the general irritation, and wrought it to a pitch by ripping up one of these terrible questions of companionship, which in our days still unhappily cause bloodshed from time to time.

A great number of M. Hardy's workmen, before

entering into his employ, had become members of a companionship, or fraternity, called the Dévorans;[1] whilst many of the stone-cutters and quarriers of the vicinity belonged to a society called the Loups (wolves), and from time immemorial rivalry the most inveterate had existed between the Loups and the Dévorans, and led to many bloody strifes, the more to be deplored as, in many points of view, the institution of companionships is excellent, inasmuch as it is founded on the fruitful and powerful principle of association. Unfortunately, instead of including all bodies of the state in one fraternal communion, companionship has been broken up into fractions of collective and distinct societies, whose rivalries often break out into fierce and sanguinary collisions.[2]

[1] Devourers is the English translation, but does not express fully the combination as it existed, and exists still, in Paris; much like the fellowship of tailors called "Flints," which existed in England (perhaps still exists), and who, in or about the year 1814-15, "turned out," or "struck," on the factories of Mr. Maberly, the eminent contractor of Paul's Wharf, London, and of whom the ringleaders were tried for conspiracy and punished. All the journeymen tailors who would not join the "Flints" were by them styled "Dungs," and they refused to work at the same boards with them. — *Eng. Trans.*

[2] We should say, to the praise of the working classes, that these sad scenes become the more rare in proportion as they become better informed, and have more consciousness of their own dignity. We should, also, attribute these better tendencies to the right influence of an excellent work on companionship, published by M. Agricola Perdiguier, called *Avignonnais-la-Vertu*, "A Working Carpenter." In this work, filled with information and curious details as to various societies of companionship, M. Agricola Perdiguier protests, with the indignation of an honest man, against the scenes of violence capable of injuring all that is useful and practicable in companionship; and this work, written with remarkable clearness, reason, and moderation, is not only an excellent work, but a noble and praiseworthy act; for M. Agricola Perdiguier has had for a long time to contend strongly, in order to bring back his associates to sensible and peaceable notions. Let us add that M. Perdiguier has instituted, by the aid of no resources but his own, in the Faubourg St. Antoine, an unpretending establishment of the greatest utility to the working classes. He lodges in his house, a model of order and good conduct, about forty or fifty working carpenters, to whom, every evening after the day's work, he gives a course of lectures on geometry and linear architecture applied to the cutting of wood. We have been present at one of these courses, and it is impossible that lectures should be more clearly delivered, or made more easy to the understanding. At ten o'clock in the evening, after the conclusion of the lecture, all the lodgers of M. Perdiguier go to their humble beds (they are forced by the low price of wages to sleep usually four in each small room). M. Perdiguier told us that study and instruction are such powerful modes of moralising, that in six years he had sent away but one of his lodgers. "At the end of two or three days," he said to us, "the ill-disposed feel that this is no place for them, and leave of their own accord." We are happy to be able, then, to render our public testimony to a man filled with information, right feeling, and the most noble devotion to the working classes. — EUGENE SUE.

For eight days the Loups, highly excited at all points, longed most eagerly to find an opportunity and excuse to come to loggerheads with the Dévorans; but, as these latter did not frequent the public-houses, and seldom quitted the factory during the week, this had hitherto been impracticable, and the Loups were compelled to await the Sunday with fierce impatience.

Moreover, a great number of quarriers and stonecutters, peaceable men and good workmen, had refused, although Loups themselves, to join in this hostile manifestation against the Dévorans of M. Hardy's factory; and the ringleaders had been obliged to raise recruits amongst the vagabonds and scamps of the barriers, whom the prospect of tumult and disorder had easily induced to enrol themselves under the flag of the warlike Loups.

Such was the muttering fermentation which agitated the little village of Villiers, whilst the two men to whom we have alluded were seated at table in the public-house.

These men had asked for and obtained a private room.

One of them was still young, and tolerably well clad, but his open waistcoat, his loosely tied cravat, his shirt stained with wine, his hair dishevelled, his haggard countenance, his swollen veins, and red eyes, betokened that a night of dissipation had preceded this morning, whilst his heavy and coarse look, his hoarse voice, and his glance, now dull and now sparkling, testified that to the stale fumes of drunkenness of the previous night were now united the first approaches of a renewed inebriety.

The companion of this man said to him, jingling their glasses together:

"Your health, my boy!"

"Yours!" replied the young fellow; "although your appearance has a devilish odd effect on me."

"Devilish odd effect?"

"Yes."

"And why, pray?"

"How did you know me?"

"Are you sorry I ever knew you?"

"Who told you I was confined in Ste. Pélagie?"

"Did I release you from gaol?"

"Why did you do so?"

"Because my heart is good."

"You love me, perhaps, — much about as the butcher loves the ox he drives to the slaughter-house."

"You are insane."

"A man does not pay ten thousand francs (400*l.*) for another without some motive."

"I have a motive."

"What is it? What do you want with me?"

"A jolly companion, who spends his money freely and without thought or care, and passes all his nights as you did the last. Good wine, good cheer, pretty girls, and merry staves! It is not a bad trade, is it?"

After remaining silent for a moment, the young man replied, with a sullen air:

"Why, the evening before I left the prison, did you make it one of the conditions of my freedom that I should write to my mistress that I would never see her again? Why did you insist that I should give you this letter?"

"What a sigh! Do you think still of her?"

"Perpetually."

"You are wrong. Your mistress is far from Paris at this moment; I saw her go away in a diligence before I returned to release you from Ste. Pélagie."

"Yes, I was choking in that gaol, and to get out I would have sold my soul to the evil one; you thought as much, and therefore came to me, only, instead of my soul, you took Céphyse away from me, — poor Queen-Bacchanal! But why — *mille tonnerres!* — will you tell me why?"

"A man who has a mistress whom he is so infatuated with as you with this girl ceases to be a man, and, in a time of trial, would want pluck."

"What time of trial?"

"Drink, man, — let us drink!"

"You make me drink too much brandy."

"Pooh! Look — see me."

"You really frighten me; it seems so devilish. A bottle of brandy does not make you wink an eyelid. You have a cast-iron inside, and a skull of marble."

"I have travelled a good deal in Russia, and there one drinks to warm oneself."

"And here to excite oneself; but let us drink if you will, only it must be wine."

"Absurd stuff! Wine is good for children; men, like us, drink brandy."

"Well, then, let's have brandy; it burns me, and one's head whirls, and then one sees all the flames of hell!"

"Come, I like you now."

"When you said just this minute that I was infatuated about Céphyse, and that in a time of trial I should want pluck, what time did you allude to?"

"Drink, man, — drink."

"One moment, if you please. You see, comrade, that I am not a bigger fool than my neighbour, and, by the few words you have let drop, I guess there's something in the wind."

"Do you?"

"You know I have been a workman, and am acquainted with a great many others, that I am a good sort of fellow enough, and popular with my comrades, and you wish to make use of me as a sort of lure to attract others."

"Go on."

"You are some one employed to get up a riot, — some emissary of a party desirous of a revolt."

"Continue."

"And you are acting for this nameless association, which carries on its business by discharges of musketry."

"Are you a coward?"

"I? Why, I burnt powder in July, and as boldly as any one."

"Are you inclined to do so again?"

"Ah, why this sort of fireworks is as good as another; but, in my opinion, revolutions are more for the agreeable than the useful. All I got out of the Barricades of the Three Days was to burn my trousers and lose my waistcoat. This is all that the people gained in my person. It's all very fine and grand to hear 'Forward! To the charge!' But what good has come of it?"

"You know a good many of M. Hardy's workmen?"

"Oh, oh, that's the reason you have brought me here!"

"It is; and you will see directly several of the workmen from his factory."

"Some of the lads from M. Hardy's wishing for a row? They are too well off for that, — you mistake."

"You will see that very shortly."

"They who are so comfortable, what have they to complain of?"

"What, when their comrades, and those who, not having a good master, are dying of hunger and misery, and they are appealed to join them? Do you believe they will remain deaf to that appeal? M. Hardy is the exception; but let the people give 'one long pull, strong pull, and pull together,' and the exception becomes the rule, and every one is content."

"There is reason in what you say; only it is requisite that the 'long pull' must, indeed, be 'a strong pull,' if it ever makes a good and honest man of my hound of an employer, the Baron Tripeaud, who has made me what I now am, — a good-for-nothing scamp."

"M. Hardy's men are coming — you are their comrade — you have no interest in deceiving them — they

will believe you; so lend me your assistance to induce them to make their decision — "

"As to what?"

"To leave the factory where they are becoming enervated, and getting so selfish as to forget the wrongs and injuries of their brothers — "

"But if they quit the factory, how are they to get a living?"

"Oh, they shall be provided for until the great day."

"And what are they to do till then?"

"What you did last night, — drink, laugh, and sing; and then all the work they will have to do will be to learn the military exercises in their rooms."

"And what induces the workmen to come here?"

"Some one has already spoken to them, — placards have been distributed amongst them, in which they are reproached for their indifference towards their brothers. Well, now, will you support me?"

"I will; and the more because I am really beginning to support myself with considerable difficulty. Céphyse was the only person in the world I cared about. I feel I am in a horrible downhill condition and you are shoving me down still lower; but let the ball roll! If one must go to the devil, it is of very little consequence by what means. Let us drink!"

"Yes; let's drink to our jolly next night's revel, — the last was but a mere rehearsal."

"What stuff are you made off — you! I look at you; but I have not seen you once, even for a moment, blush or smile, or appear moved or excited; but, then, you are like a man made of cast iron."

"I am no longer fifteen years of age, and I must have something quite different to make me laugh; but, to-night, I shall laugh, — yes, to-night."

"I do not know if it is the brandy, or what it is, but, devil rock me, if you don't make me shudder when you say you shall laugh to-night."

So saying, the young man rose from his seat, staggering as he did so; he was getting drunk again. There was a knock at the door.

"Come in!"

The landlord entered.

"What is it?"

"There is a young man below, who says his name's Olivier; he asks for M. Morok."

"I am he; tell him to come up."

The landlord left the room.

"This is one of your men, but he is alone," said Morok, whose coarse features expressed disappointment. "Alone! That surprises me. I expected several. Do you know him?"

"Olivier? Yes, a fair young man, I think."

"We shall see; here he is."

And a young man with an open countenance, at once bold and intelligent, entered the little room.

"Ah, Couche-tout-Nud!" he exclaimed, at the sight of Morok's companion.

"Yes; here I am. Why, it is an age since we met, Olivier!"

"But easily explained, my boy, as we do not work in the same factory."

"But are you alone?" asked Morok.

And pointing to Couche-tout-Nud, he added:

"You may speak before him, — he is one of ourselves. But, again, why are you alone?"

"I am alone; but I have come in my comrades' name."

"Ah!" said Morok, with a sigh of satisfaction. "They consent."

"They refuse; and so do I."

"What! refuse? Then they have no more firmness than women," exclaimed Morok, grinding his teeth with rage.

"Listen!" said Olivier, calmly; "we have received

your letters, — seen your agent; we have had the proof that he was, in fact, affiliated with the secret societies, with several of whose members we are acquainted."

"Well; and why do you hesitate?"

"In the first place, we have no evidence that these societies are ready for a movement."

"But I tell you they are."

"He — he — says it," said Couche-tout-Nud, stammering; "and I confirm it. Forward! On, my boys!"

"That is not sufficient," continued Olivier; "and, moreover, we have reflected upon it. For the last eight days the workshop has been divided! Yesterday we had a very warm, and even painful, discussion; but this morning old M. Simon came to us, and we talked the affair over with him. He convinced us, and now we shall wait — if the outbreak comes — then we shall see — "

"Is this your final resolve?"

"Most decidedly."

"Silence!" exclaimed Couche-tout-Nud, suddenly, listening, and trying to steady himself on his tottering legs; "there is a noise as if of a crowd of people at a distance."

And there was heard a murmuring sound which grew louder every instant, and by degrees increased into a decided tumult.

"What can it be?" said Olivier, surprised.

"Now," said Morok, with a sinister smile, "I remember the landlord told me when I came in that there was a great ferment in the village against the factory. If you and your comrades had been separated from the other workmen of M. Hardy, as I believed, these people who are beginning to clamour would have been with you instead of against you."

"This rendezvous, then, was an ambush contrived to excite one party of M. Hardy's workmen against the other!" exclaimed Olivier; "and you were in hopes

that we should have made common cause with those persons who had been excited against the factory, and that — "

The young man could not continue. A terrific burst of mingled cries, hisses, and yells, made the public-house reëcho again.

At the same moment the owner of the cabaret burst into the room, exclaiming:

"Gentlemen, is there any person here belonging to the manufactory of M. Hardy?"

"I do," said Olivier.

"Then it is all up with you; the Loups have come in crowds inquiring for the Dévorans from M. Hardy's, and they desire to fight out their quarrel; unless, indeed, the Dévorans are willing to forsake the manufactory they at present belong to, and join with them."

"A regular snare," cried Olivier, regarding Morok and Couche-tout-Nud with a threatening air; "had my comrades chanced to be here, we should have been led into a pretty scrape."

"Who do you mean," said Couche-tout-Nud, almost gasping for breath, "when you talk of laying snares and leading you into mischief? You cannot allude to me, Olivier? Impossible!"

"Let the Dévorans come out and fight us like men, or let them join with the Loups!" burst in one simultaneous shout from the infuriated crowd who were pressing to attack the house.

"Come, come!" exclaimed the master of the inn, as, without giving Olivier time to reply, he seized him by the arm, and drawing him towards a window which opened on to the roof of a low pent-house, he cried:

"Jump from this window on to the ledge below, then slide down, and gain the open fields, there is still time for you to do so."

And seeing the young man hesitate, the terrified landlord added:

"Why, what chance have you against at least two hundred persons? A minute longer and you are lost. Do you hear them? They have entered the courtyard, and are coming up-stairs."

And he was right; for at this instant the cries, yells, groans, and other discordant noises were heard with redoubled violence, while the wooden staircase leading to the first floor shook beneath the rapid trampling of the fierce crowd who hurried upwards, exclaiming, in tones of sharp defiance, momentarily brought nearer and nearer:

"Let the Dévorans turn out and fight us like men!"

"Olivier," cried Couche-tout-Nud, almost sobered by the pressing danger, "fly, save yourself while you can!"

But scarcely had he uttered the words when the doors which led from the large salon to the small apartment occupied by himself and party were dashed open with a fearful crash.

"Here they are!" ejaculated the terrified landlord, clasping his hands in wild affright; then, running to Olivier, he almost forced him out of the window, for the young man struggled violently to resist him, and even remained with one leg hanging over the sill of the casement till the landlord forcibly pushed him on to the projecting pent-house, from whence he at once dropped to the ground.

Having closed the window, the landlord returned towards Morok just at the moment when the latter was leaving the room to proceed to the large saloon into which the leaders of the Loup party had just forced their way, while their companions were loudly vociferating on the staircase as well as in the courtyard.

Eight or ten of these rash, unthinking men, who were, unknown to themselves, being urged to all this disorder and outrage, first rushed into the salon armed with thick bludgeons, while their countenances were alike inflamed by rage and intoxication.

A quarryman of gigantic height and herculean proportions, with an old red handkerchief tied around his head and hanging in tattered morsels on his shoulders, while a miserable, half worn goat-skin clothed his chest and shoulders, appeared to direct the movements of the party. He bore in his hand a heavy crowbar, and, advancing with fierce and fiery aspect, glaring eyeballs, and threatening gestures, made directly for the adjoining room, affecting to drive back Morok, and exclaiming, in a voice of thunder:

"Where are the Dévorans? The Loups are ready to fall upon and devour them!"

The landlord quickly opened the chamber door, saying:

"There is no one here, my friends; see, look, and satisfy yourselves there is nobody."

"No more there is," returned the quarryman, much surprised after having thrown a hasty glance around the room. "Where are they, then? We were told there were, at least, fifteen or more of them here. Well, if we had found them, we would have compelled them either to proceed with us at once to attack the manufactory, or else come to a pitched battle, which would have been a smasher for them."

"Never mind," chimed in a second voice, "if they are not here now they will be sure to come, so we will have a little patience and wait for their arrival."

"Yes, yes," resounded from many voices, "let us wait."

"Ah, to be sure!" cried another party; "we shall have a good view of each other."

"If the Loups are anxious to behold the Dévorans," said Morok, "why do they not go and howl defiance around the manufactory where these atheistical miscreants are to be found? Then, at their first summons, their enemies would come forth and join in the fight so much desired."

"Fighting!" repeated Couche-tout-Nud, mechanically, "would there then be a battle?"

"There would," replied Morok, "unless, indeed, the Loups fear to engage in open combat with the Dévorans."

"Then, by way of showing you whether we fear or not," exclaimed the gigantic quarryman, in a voice of thunder, and advancing towards Morok as he spake, "you shall go along with us, and then you shall witness our close and deadly encounter."

An infuriated cry arose from the rest of the party. "Who dares say the Loups fear to meet the Dévorans?"

"It would be the first time if they did!"

"A fight, a fight, and let that end the quarrel!"

"It is time to make things square and equal. Why should we have so many grievances to endure, while they are pampered up and enjoy every comfort?"

"Have they not dared to say that the quarrymen were a set of stupid brutes, good for nothing but to work amid the machinery of the quarries like so many turnspits?"

"And that they (the Dévorans) would strip off the skin from our (the Loups) backs, and make themselves caps with them!"

"Why, they are nothing but brute beasts themselves," chimed in an emissary of the abbé's; "a set of graceless pagans who never, any more than their families, show their faces at mass. Shameful, shameful! Enough to bring God's curse upon us all."

"And as our excellent curé said from his pulpit, such conduct would surely have the effect of drawing down the vengeance of Heaven, and bringing the cholera upon us as a scourge and righteous punishment for such neglect of duty."

"That's true enough! I heard the curé with my own ears say so from his pulpit."

"So did all our wives."

"Down with the Dévorans! We are not going to be destroyed by cholera through their sinfulness."

"A fight, a fight!" screamed out a full chorus of discordant voices.

"Off to the manufactory, then, my brave Loups!" exclaimed Morok, in a stentorian voice. "Off to the manufactory, I say!"

"Ay, ay, to the manufactory! To the manufactory!" reëchoed the crowd, with infuriated shouts; and by this time both salon and staircase were filled with a dense mass of half maddened creatures, wrought up to any act of outrage or violence.

Their frenzied cries recalled Couche-tout-Nud completely to himself, and whispering to Morok, he said:

"What do these men purpose doing? There will be bloodshed and murder. I'll have nothing to do with it."

"We shall have time to give the alarm at the factory," replied Morok; "we will slip away on the road thither." Then, calling in a loud voice to the landlord, who was all aghast at this uproar and direful confusion, he said:

"Bring brandy, that we may drink to the health of the brave Loups. I'll stand the treat!"

With these words he flung some silver towards the landlord, who soon disappeared, and as quickly returned, bearing several bottles of brandy, and a quantity of glasses.

"What do you mean by offering us glasses?" cried Morok. "Do you suppose that friends, such as we are, drink to each other in glasses?" And knocking the cork out of the bottle, he held the neck to his lips; and after having drunk, passed it to the gigantic and ferocious-looking quarryman.

"With all my heart!" exclaimed the latter. "Here's to our friend and his treat; and I say he's a cur that refuses. This is a prime whet to sharpen the fangs of the Loups."

"Help yourselves, friends!" said Morok, distributing the bottles among the crowd.

"I tell you," murmured Couche-tout-Nud, comprehending, in spite of his intoxicated condition, all the dangers to be apprehended from men so unnaturally excited, "this will end in blood;" but his words passed unheeded, and having drunk their fill, the riotous mass quitted the premises, to proceed, shouting and hallooing, towards the factory of M. Hardy.

Such of the work-people, and other inhabitants of the village, who had kept aloof from these hostile measures (and they formed a large majority), did not show themselves as the tumultuous rabble passed through the principal street; but a large body of women, rendered fanatical by the preaching of the abbé, cheered them on, and encouraged the formidable band of insurgents by loud and clamorous notes of approval.

At the head of the rioters marched the herculean quarryman, brandishing his formidable crowbar, while behind him flocked, in wild disorder, a crowd of half drunken, desperate men, some carrying bludgeons, others stones, or any other missile they could collect. Their brains on fire with the copious libations of brandy, so unsparingly dealt out to them, they were in a state of almost frantic excitement, while the expression of their flushed and inflamed countenances was fearful to behold; and the most frightful consequences might be expected from beings so completely at the mercy of the fiercest and most ungoverned passions.

Holding each other by the arm, and walking four or five abreast, the Loups wrought themselves up still more, by singing in loud voices their different war-songs, repeating the various choruses with increasing wildness and savage exultation. The last couplet concludes as follows:

"Let's on, brave boys, with courage bold,
Let's raise our arm with strength;
Prudence avaunt! for now, behold,
We face our foes at length!

Sons of a king of glorious name,
Shame blanches not our cheek!
Then let us bravely seek,
Or death, or lasting fame.
Sons of King Solomon the great are we,
Then, let one daring effort see
Us dead or free!"

Morok and Couche-tout-Nud had disappeared while the tumultuous crowd were rushing in swarms from the public-house to repair to the factory of M. Hardy.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "MAISON COMMUNE."

WHILST the Loups, as we have seen, were preparing for a furious attack against the Dévorans, the factory of M. Hardy presented the appearance that morning of a holy-day quite in accordance with the serenity of the sky; for the wind was northerly, and the weather cold enough for a fine day in March.

Nine o'clock had just struck by the clock of the Maison Commune of the workmen, which was separated from the workshops by a wide walk planted with trees.

The rising sun threw its beams on the imposing mass of buildings situated a league from Paris, in a spot as pleasant as healthy, and whence could be seen the wooded and picturesque banks which on this side command a view of the great city.

Nothing could be more plain and cheerful than the Maison Commune of the work-people. The roof of red tiles came beyond the white walls, intersected here and there by large courses of bricks, which contrasted agreeably with the green colour of the outside blinds of the first and second stories.

These buildings, exposed to the south and east, were surrounded by a vast garden of ten acres in extent; in some places, planted by trees in quincunxes; and in others, in kitchen-gardens and orchards.

Before we continue this description, which may, perhaps, seem almost magical, let us first declare that the marvels of which we are about to sketch the picture

ought not to be considered as utopian or dreams; but, on the contrary, nothing is more true and actual, and, let us add, and not only add, but prove (and in these times, such a proof will give singular weight and interest to the assertion), these marvels were the result of an excellent speculation, and eventually produced an investment as profitable as certain.

To undertake a worthy, useful, and great work; to imbue a considerable number of human creatures with an ideal state of comfort, when compared with the frightful and almost murderous destiny to which they are almost condemned; to instruct them, and elevate them in their own eyes; to induce them to prefer to the low habits of the public-house, or rather to those intoxicating tastes which these unhappy persons seek there to their ruin, in order to escape the consciousness of their miserable destiny, — to make them prefer to this the pleasures of the mind, the amusements of the arts; to make mankind moral through their happiness; in a word, thanks to a noble commencement to an example of easy copy, to take a place amongst the benefactors of society, and at the same time to find it a most remunerative matter, — all this appears fabulous. Such was, however, the secret of the marvels of which we write.

Let us now enter the interior of the factory.

Agricola, ignorant of the disappearance of the poor Mayeux, gave himself up to the brightest hopes when he thought of Angèle, and finished his toilet with no small care, in order to go and see his betrothed.

Let us say two words as to the lodgings which the smith occupied in the Maison Commune at the incredibly low price of sixty-five francs a year, like the other single men.

This lodging was on the second floor, and consisted of a very nice bedchamber and closet, looking towards the south and to the garden. The floor made of deal

was perfectly white; the iron bedstead had a palliasse of maize leaves, an excellent mattress, with soft blankets; a gas-pipe and a calorific tube gave, when needed, light and comfortable warmth to the apartment, which was decorated with a pretty Indian paper, with curtains to match. A chest of drawers, a walnut-tree table, several chairs, etc., a small bookcase, completed Agricola's furniture; whilst in the closet, which was large and light, was a chest to hold clothes, a table for articles of washing, and a large zinc basin, over which was a tap, which supplied water at will.

If we compare this agreeable, wholesome, and convenient apartment to the dark, dismal, cold, and dilapidated attic, for which the worthy fellow paid ninety francs a year in his mother's house, to reach which he had to walk every night more than a league and a half, we may understand the sacrifice which his affection made for that excellent woman.

Agricola, after having cast a proud and satisfactory glance in his looking-glass, after combing his moustache and large *impériale*, left the chamber to go and join Angèle in the common laundry. The passage along which he passed was large, lighted up from above, and boarded with deal, which was kept as white as snow.

In spite of some seeds of discord thrown some time since by M. Hardy's enemies in the midst of this association of workmen until then so fraternally united, there were heard joyful songs in almost every room along the corridor; and Agricola, as he passed by several open doors, exchanged a hearty "good morning" with many of his comrades.

The smith ran quickly down the staircase, crossed the bowling-green planted with trees, in the midst of which a fountain threw out sparkling jets of water, and reached the other wing of the building. There was the room in which a party of wives and daughters of the associated workmen, who were not employed in the factory, made

up all the furniture for the apartments. This arrangement, added to the vast saving which was made in the purchase of the materials wholesale, being carried out in the factory by the Association, reduced immensely the retail cost of every article.

After having crossed the linen room, a very large apartment looking into the garden, very airy in the summer and very warm in the winter, Agricola went and rapped at the door of Angèle's mother's room.

If we have a few words to say with respect to this apartment, which was on the first floor looking to the east, and with a view of the garden, it is because it offered a sample of the housekeeper's dwelling in the Association at a rent still incredibly low of 125 francs by the year.[1]

A sort of entrance from the corridor led to a very large apartment, on each side of which was a chamber somewhat smaller, intended for a family when the sons or daughters were too big to sleep any longer in one of the two dormitories arranged like the dormitories at schools, and intended for children of both sexes. Every night the care of these dormitories was entrusted to the father or mother of a family belonging to the Association.

The apartment to which we now refer was, like all the rest, entirely destitute of any kitchen materials, all the meals being had in common in another part of the building, and, therefore, was kept with great order and cleanliness. A good-sized carpet, a comfortable armchair, some pretty cups and saucers on a shelf of

[1] M. Adolphe Bobierre, in a small work lately published (*De l'Air considéré sous le Rapport de la Salubrité*), enters into singular and actual details as to the indispensable necessity for the renewal of air for the preservation of health. It results from the experience of science that, in order to preserve a man in a wholesome condition, he requires six to ten cubic metres (eight to twelve yards) of fresh and renewed air every hour. One shudders, then, in reflecting on the dark and stifling workshops where such quantities of workmen are crowded together. Amongst the excellent conclusions of M. Bobierre's pamphlet we may quote the following, joining with him in calling the attention of the Council of Health, which daily does so much good, to this, "As soon as any workshop has more than ten workmen, it should be inspected by delegates of the Committee of Health, who should certify that its arrangements are not such as to affect the health of the artisans who are employed there."

deal nicely varnished, several pictures hung from the walls, a clock of gilt bronze, a bed, a chest of drawers, and *secrétaire* of mahogany announced that the lodgers in these rooms added some trifling superfluities to their necessary furniture.

Angèle, who from this time may be considered as the betrothed of Agricola, justified in every particular the flattering portrait drawn by the smith at his interview with poor La Mayeux. This charming young girl, who was about seventeen years of age, dressed with equal simplicity and neatness, was seated beside her mother. When Agricola entered, she blushed slightly as she saw him.

"Mademoiselle," said the smith, "I have come to fulfil my promise, if your mother consents."

"Certainly, M. Agricola, I consent," replied the young girl's mother, cordially; "she would not go and see over the Maison Commune and the buildings either with her father, her brother, or with me, that she might have the pleasure of seeing it to-day (Sunday) with you. So much the better for her, as you, who talk so well, can do the honours of the house to her who is a stranger in it, and for the last hour she has been waiting for you with the greatest impatience."

"Excuse me, mademoiselle," said Agricola, gaily, "whilst I was thinking of the pleasure of seeing you I lost an hour. This is the only excuse I can offer."

"Ah, mother," said the young girl to her mother, in a tone of gentle reproach, and blushing deeply, "why did you say that?"

"Is it true or not? I did not say it reproachfully, quite the contrary. Go, my dear, M. Agricola will explain to you better than I can how deeply all the workpeople of the factory are indebted to M. Hardy."

"M. Agricola," said Angèle, tying the ribands of her very pretty cap, "what a pity your good little adopted sister is not with us."

"What, La Mayeux! You are right, mademoiselle; but it is only a pleasure delayed, the visit she paid us yesterday was not the last."

The young girl, after having kissed her mother, went out, taking Agricola's arm.

"Indeed, M. Agricola," said Angèle, "if you knew how much I have been surprised when I came into this nice house, I who had been accustomed to see so much misery amongst the poor working people in the country — misery which I have shared, too — whilst here everybody seems so happy, so contented! It is like a fairy tale. Really, I think I must be dreaming; and when I asked my mother for an explanation of this fairy tale, she replied, 'M. Agricola will explain all this to you.'"

"Do you know why the gratifying task gives me so much pleasure, mademoiselle?" said Agricola, with a tone at once serious and tender. "It is because nothing could happen more apropos."

"How, M. Agricola?"

"To show you this house, and point out to you all the advantages of our Association, is as if I were to say to you, 'Here, mademoiselle, the artisan, certain of the present and certain of the future, is not compelled, like so many of his fraternity, frequently to renounce the sweetest hopes of the heart — the desire of choosing a companion for life, in the fear of uniting his own misery to another misery.'"

Angèle looked down and blushed.

"Here the workman may, without uneasiness, give himself up to the hope of the sweet enjoyment of a family, quite sure that he will not hereafter be heartbroken at the sight of the horrible privations of those who are most dear to him. Here, thanks to order, labour, the right application of each man's ability, men, women, and children live happy and content. In a word, in order to explain all this to you," added Agricola, smiling, and with a most tender look, "it is to

prove to you, mademoiselle, that here nothing can be more reasonable than to love — nothing wiser than to marry."

"M. Agricola," replied Angèle, with a voice full of emotion, and blushing still deeper, "suppose we begin our walk."

"Instantly, mademoiselle," replied the smith, delighted at the agitation he had caused in this ingenuous breast; "here we are close to the dormitory of the little girls, — the little warblers who have left their nests this long time; let us go there."

"Willingly, M. Agricola."

The young smith and Angèle entered at once into a spacious dormitory, closely resembling that of a well-regulated school. The small iron beds were symmetrically arranged; at each extremity were the beds of two married women who had families, and who, in turns, were the superintendents.

"Oh, how nicely this dormitory is arranged, M. Agricola. How beautifully clean. Who attends to it so carefully?"

"The children themselves. There are no servants here, and there is an immense rivalry existing amongst these infants as to who can best make the beds, and it amuses them quite as much as if they were making their doll's bed. Little girls, as you must be aware, are very fond of playing at housekeeping. Well, here they play at it in earnest, and it is remarkably well done — "

"Ah, I understand; their natural inclinations for certain amusements are brought into play here."

"That is the whole secret, and you will see them in each department very usefully employed, and overjoyed at the importance which their occupations give them."

"Ah, M. Agricola," said Angèle, with timidity, "when we compare these nice dormitories, so healthy and so warm, to those wretched garrets, cold as ice, where the children are huddled together on wretched palliasses,

frozen with cold, as is the case with almost all the working people in our provinces — "

"And in Paris, mademoiselle, it is still worse."

"Oh, how good, generous, and, moreover, how rich, M. Hardy must be, to spend so much money — in doing so much good!"

"I shall very much astonish you, mademoiselle," said Agricola, smiling; "so much so, that, perhaps, you will not believe me."

"Why not, M. Agricola?"

"Assuredly there is not a kinder-hearted, more generous man in the world than M. Hardy; he does good for the sake of good, without thinking of his interest; but, suppose, mademoiselle, he was the most selfish, interested, avaricious man in the world, he would find an enormous profit in making us all as happy and comfortable as we are."

"Can that be possible, M. Agricola? You say so, and I must believe you; but if to do so much good is so easy, and even so profitable, why is there not more of it done?"

"Ah, mademoiselle, three conditions are required, very rarely combined in the same person: Knowledge, power, will."

"Alas! yes, those who know perhaps cannot."

"And those who can do not know, or will not."

"But how does M. Hardy find so much advantage in the good which he enables you to enjoy?"

"That I will explain to you presently, mademoiselle."

"Oh, what a delightful, sweet smell of fruit!" said Angèle, suddenly.

"It is the general fruit-room, which is close by; and I will bet a wager that you will see, near at hand, several of our small birds of the dormitory employed, not in stealing, but at work."

Agricola opened a door and led Angèle into a good-sized room, with shelves, on which winter fruits were

nicely arranged, and several children from seven to eight years of age, clad neatly and warmly, and rosy with health, were gaily employed, under the superintendence of a woman, in picking out and examining the spoiled fruit.

"You see," said Agricola, "that everywhere, and as much as possible, we employ children. These occupations are amusements for them, and suit the stir and activity of their age, and so the time of women and young girls is devoted to much more useful occupation."

"True, M. Agricola; and really how very wisely all this is arranged!"

"And if you saw the little children in the kitchen, you would be surprised at the services they render; with one or two women to direct them they do the work of eight or ten servants."

"Why," said Angèle, smiling, "at this age children are so fond of playing at preparing the dinner that these must be delighted."

"Precisely so; and under the idea of playing at gardening, it is they who in the garden weed the ground, gather the fruit and vegetables, wall the flowers, rake the walks, etc.; in a word, this army of working youngsters, who usually await ten or twelve years of age before they can be of any service, are here made very useful; and except three hours school-time — quite enough for them — from the age of six or seven years their amusements are, in fact, serious occupations, and, in truth, these dear little things, by saving the more powerful arms, which are exercised for their living, earn more than they cost; and then, indeed, mademoiselle, do you not think that, in the sight of infancy thus mingling with all labours, there is something soft, pure, and almost sacred, which puts a right restraint on words and actions? The coarsest man respects childhood."

"The more I reflect, the more I see how greatly all

this is calculated to effect general benefit!" said Angèle, with warmth.

"But it has not been effected without trouble; there was a routine to establish, prejudices to subdue. But look, Mlle. Angèle, here is the common kitchen," added the smith, with a smile; "is it not as imposing as the kitchen of a barrack or some large boarding-school?"

In truth, the kitchen of the Maison Commune was immense. All the utensils shone with brightness, and, thanks to arrangements as remarkable as they are economical in modern science (always denied to the poor classes, to whom they are of most importance, because they can only be carried on upon a large scale), not only were the fireplace and the stoves kept alight with a quantity of fuel, half as small as that which each private kitchen would singly have used, but the excess of heat is employed by means of a calorific, admirably managed to diffuse an equal temperature throughout all the chambers of the Maison Commune.

There also, under the direction of two active women, the children were usefully employed. Nothing could be more comic than the serious looks of the children at work in the kitchen; and it was the same in the bake-house, where they made, at a vast reduction of cost (by buying the wheat wholesale), that excellent household bread, a wholesome and nutritive mixture of pure wheat flour and rye, so preferable to that white and light bread which too often acquires those qualities by the aid of unwholesome substances.

"Good day, Madame Bertrand," said Agricola, gaily, to a kind-looking matron who was gravely contemplating the slow evolutions of several spits worthy of Gamacho's wedding, so gloriously were they laden with pieces of beef, mutton, and veal, which were beginning to assume a delicious gold-brown colour that was most appetising. "Good day, Madame Bertrand," said Agricola, "according to custom, I cannot pass the kitchen door; and I

wish to introduce this young lady to its acquaintance, as she has only been here for a few days."

"Oh, pray look in and admire — particularly that young party around the table — see how industrious and well-behaved they are."

So saying, the matron pointed with a large basting-ladle she held in her hand, as a sort of culinary sceptre, to a group of children of both sexes deeply absorbed in the various occupations entrusted to them, such as peeling potatoes, picking herbs, etc.

"Why, we shall have a second Belshazzar's feast, eh, Madame Bertrand?" said Agricola, smiling.

"To be sure we shall, my lad; why, are not all our meals feasts? Here is to-day's bill of fare. Good vegetable soup, with bouillon, roast beef, and potatoes; salad, cheese, and fruit. Oh, but I forgot, to-day being Sunday, we are to have baked plum-puddings, which are now being prepared by Mother Denis at the bakehouse; and I doubt not but that just now the oven and the puddings are alike hot!"

"Upon my word, Madame Bertrand, your description makes me feel desperately hungry," said Agricola, sportively. "Ah, it is very easy to know when it has been your turn to preside over the kitchen!" added he, in a flattering tone.

"Go along with you, making game of an old woman," said the chief of the victualling department, gaily.

"One thing surprises me above all, M. Agricola," said Angèle to her companion, as they proceeded onwards; "it is to compare the insufficiency and unwholesome food of the working class in our part of the country with what I see here."

"And yet we don't spend more than twenty-five sous a day in being far better fed here than we could be for three times the sum in Paris."

"Really, it seems incredible; and how do you account for this wonderful advantage?"

"It is one of the magical wonders produced by the wand of M. Hardy. I will explain it all to you directly."

"Oh, how I long to see this good M. Hardy!"

"Then you will soon have your wish gratified — perhaps to-day — for we expect him every minute; but here we are at the refectory, which I believe you have never seen, since your family, like most others, prefer having their meals sent to them. Just see what a very nice, cheerful room it is, looking out on the garden, and exactly opposite the fountain."

The refectory was a long, well-constructed building, having eight large windows looking out upon a well-kept garden. Tables, covered with highly polished oilcloth, were ranged down each side, so that during winter the room served as a general rendezvous for the different workmen who, when the labours of the day were ended, preferred assembling together here to passing the evening alone, and where they amused themselves according to their several tastes, either in reading, conversation, with cards, or any light occupation; here, in an apartment well warmed and brilliantly lighted by gas, they refreshed and recreated themselves against the morrow's toil.

"But," said Agricola, "you will be better pleased with this building when I tell you that twice a week we have a sort of ball here, and on alternate evenings we get up a concert."

"Do you, indeed?"

"Yes, I assure you," replied the smith, with a sort of pride, "we have amongst us several excellent practical musicians, quite able to furnish the necessary music for our balls; and then, twice a week, we practise singing all together, men, women, and children.[1] Unfortunately, during the past week, our concerts have been interrupted by some unpleasant and unexpected disturbances in the factory."

[1] We were among the number of those admitted to the admirable concerts of the "Orpheon," where more than one thousand work-people, men, women, and children, sang with marvellous precision and effect.

"How charming it must be to hear so many voices all singing together!"

"I can assure you it produces a very fine effect, and M. Hardy has always greatly encouraged a mode of recreation which he says (and with much reason) exercises so powerful an influence on the mind and manners."

"For a whole winter he had here, at his own expense, two pupils of the celebrated M. Wilhelm, since which time our singing has greatly improved; and really, Mlle. Angèle, without any vanity, I may venture to say that it is impossible to imagine anything more affecting than to hear upwards of two hundred voices chanting forth in one harmonious strain some stirring hymn in favour of liberty and labour, — you must hear them, and then I feel sure you will agree that there is grandeur and sublimity, almost heart-stirring, in this simultaneous burst of full, sonorous sounds."

"Indeed, I doubt it not; but how delightful to live in such a place as this, where all is joy and pleasure, — for labour, thus blended with amusement, must cease to be a task, and create nothing but happiness and real enjoyment!"

"Alas!" replied Agricola, "we have here our share in the common lot of griefs and sorrows. Do you see that building standing out at a distance from the factory?"

"Yes; what is it?"

"Our infirmary; happily, thanks to our wholesome food, pure air, and excellent regulations, it is very seldom full. An annual collection among ourselves enables us to have a most skilful doctor; besides which, we have a sort of club, so managed, that in case of illness, a member of it receives two-thirds of what he would earn if in good health."

"What a very excellent plan! But please to tell me, M. Agricola. What is that I see on the other side of the greensward?"

"It is the wash-house and laundry, where there is a continual supply of hot and cold water; the building you perceive adjoining is the drying-house; farther still are the granaries and stables for the use of the horses employed in the manufactory."

"And now, M. Agricola, that you have described all these wonders to me, are you able to tell me the secret by which they are brought about?"

"In less than ten minutes, mademoiselle, all that will be made clear to you!"

Unfortunately the ardent curiosity of Angèle was not fated to be immediately gratified. The young couple were now close to a sort of open trellis-work which bounded the garden on the side where the principal alley ran, separating the workshops from the Maison Commune. All at once, the distant sound of trumpets and other martial music came swelling on the breeze; then the quick tread of two rapidly approaching horses, followed by the appearance of a general officer, mounted on a handsome long-tailed, coal-black charger, decked with crimson housings. The officer wore the style of dress adopted under Napoleon, that is to say he had high boots reaching above his knees, and white breeches, while his blue uniform glittered with its rich golden embroidery. The broad red riband of the Legion of Honour was tied around his right epaulette, which presented one blaze of silver, while his hat, deeply bordered with gold, displayed the floating white plume, the peculiar distinction of the maréchals of France.

A more imposing specimen of a brave, chivalric soldier, accoutred in military costume, and mounted on his warlike steed, could not be presented to the eye.

When Maréchal Simon (for it was he himself) reached the place where Angèle and Agricola were standing, he pulled his horse up suddenly, descended lightly, and threw the reins to a servant in livery, who followed him on horseback.

"Where shall I wait, M. le Duc?" demanded the groom.

"At the end of the alley," replied the maréchal. Then taking off his hat with an air of respectful deference, he walked quickly on, still holding it in his hand to meet some person who was as yet unseen by either Angèle or Agricola.

The object of the maréchal's eager, yet deferential search now made his appearance at the other end of the walk, — it was an old man, with a countenance at once energetic and intelligent; he wore a neat, clean blouse, a cloth cap covered his long white locks, while, his hands tucked in his pockets, he was contentedly smoking an old meerschaum.

"A good day, and many of them, my dear father," cried the maréchal, embracing with all the warmth of boyish affection his aged parent, who, after holding him in a long and tight embrace, exclaimed, observing that he continued to keep his hat off:

"Come, come, my boy, put on your hat, no ceremony with your old father, I beg! But," added he smilingly, "how gay you are to-day!"

"My dear father, I have just come from a review close by, and I availed myself of the opportunity to pay you an early visit."

"Quite right! But then I hope your coming will not deprive me of the pleasure of seeing my dear little granddaughters."

"Not at all, my dear father; they are coming — the carriage will bring them."

"But what has occurred, my good lad, to make you so unusually serious to-day?"

"The truth is, dear father," replied the maréchal, with an appearance of deep and painful emotion, "I have to speak to you upon some very serious subjects."

"Come indoors with me, then," said the old man, growing uneasy.

And with these words, the maréchal and his father, turning in the direction of the circuitous path, disappeared from the view of Angèle and Agricola. As for Angèle, she could not restrain her surprise at finding that a glittering general officer, styled by his attendant "M. le Duc," could be son to an old working man, dressed in a common blouse. After trying in vain to repress her curiosity, she looked towards Agricola with a bewildered air, and said:

"M. Agricola — pray tell me — this old man in the blouse — "

"Is the father of the Maréchal Duc de Ligny, the friend — yes," continued Agricola, in a tone of deep feeling, "I may presume to say, the friend of my father, who for upwards of twenty years fought under his command."

"Wonderful!" said Angèle; "so high in rank, yet so tender and respectful to his old father! Ah, the maréchal must possess a noble heart! But why does he permit his father to work for his living?"

"Because that father would not quit his employment or the manufactory for any inducement that could be held out to him; he was born a workman, and a workman he will die, spite of his son being a duke and a marshal of France"

CHAPTER XX.

THE SECRET.

When Angèle had recovered from the very natural astonishment caused by the arrival of Maréchal Simon, Agricola said to her, smilingly:

"I must not avail myself of this little interruption to our conversation to evade my promise of telling you the secret of all the wonders of our Maison Commune."

"Indeed, M. Agricola," replied Angèle, "I should not have allowed you to escape its performance. I am already too much interested in all I have seen and heard."

"Then please to listen attentively, whilst I explain how M. Hardy, by the simple witchcraft of employing three cabalistical words, has brought all these marvels to bear. The words gifted with such magic power are: Association, Community, and Fraternity. We have learned to know and to feel the full value of these words, which have effected advantages equally great both to M. Hardy and ourselves."

"That is the point which strikes me as so very remarkable, M. Agricola."

"Suppose, mademoiselle, that, instead of being what he is, M. Hardy had been a close-minded, hard-hearted man, thinking merely of his own gain, he would reason thus: 'What do I require to make my manufactory return a good profit? First-rate workmen, strict economy in the raw material, judicious occupation of the time of the work-people; in fact, a rigid attention to the most economical mode of producing the article required, in

order to be enabled to offer it as cheaply as possible in the market, with as great perfection as attainable, in order to obtain the best prices given.'"

"Certainly, M. Agricola, no manufacturer could desire more."

"Well, then, mademoiselle, all these points might have been accomplished, as they have been; but now, in this manner, in merely a speculative view, M. Hardy would have said: 'If my work-people live at a distance from the manufactory, it will cost them both time and labour to come and go; as they must necessarily rise earlier in the morning, it will diminish their hours of sleep, and to take from the repose so necessary to recruit the strength of a working man is a false calculation; in proportion as the health of the artisan suffered, so would his work. Then, during severe weather, the long journey to the factory would be rendered still worse; the workman arriving wet, cold, and weary, what could be expected from his labour?'"

"That is unfortunately but too true, M. Agricola. When I was at Lille, I often reached the manufactory wet to the skin, from having been exposed all the way to a cold, drenching rain, and sometimes I could scarcely work from the chilliness and shivering it brought on."

"Well, then, Mlle. Angèle, the calculating manufacturer would say: 'Now, by lodging my work-people close to the factory, I obviate this difficulty. Let us calculate: the married artisan pays as an average price, in Paris, about 250 francs (10*l.*) a year; for that he has two miserable rooms, with a small closet, the whole dark, confined, and ill ventilated, in some close, unhealthy neighbourhood. There he lives, cramped up with his sickly, squalid family, himself ailing and enfeebled, and what labour can be expected from a weakened frame? As for the single workmen, who require a smaller lodging, they usually pay about 150 francs (6*l.*) a year. Now just let us reckon: I employ 146 married workmen;

these men then pay, altogether, for the wretched dog-holes they inhabit, 36,500 francs per annum. I also employ 115 unmarried men, who also pay in the whole 17,280 francs annually, making a total of fifty thousand francs for rent, the interest of a million.' "

"Really, M. Agricola, who would think that so immense a sum could be produced by uniting the price of so many humble lodgings?"

"Yes, it is even so, mademoiselle, — fifty thousand francs a year; the interest producible by the investment of a million francs. 'So, then,' says our speculator, 'in order to persuade my workmen to give up their dwellings in Paris, I will offer them great advantages; I will even reduce what they now pay for rent to one-half, and, instead of unwholesome chambers, they shall have large, airy apartments, with facilities for having them both warmed and lighted at a very small cost; thus 146 married men will pay me only 125 francs for rent, and 115 single men, seventy-five francs, making a total of from twenty-six to twenty-seven thousand francs. A building large enough to accommodate such a number of persons will cost me at the most five hundred thousand francs.[1] I shall then, at least, get five per cent. for my money, which will be a safe investment, since I can always pay myself out of the wages of my work-people.' "

"Ah, M. Agricola, I begin to see how advantageous it is to do good, if even considered in a pecuniary light."

"And I for one," answered Agricola, "am quite sure that all affairs conducted with honour and integrity are profitable in the end; but to return to our speculator.

[1] This estimate is correct, though perhaps a little exaggerated. A similar building, about a mile from Paris, near Montrouge, with all the vast dependencies, such as kitchen, wash-house, scullery, etc., reservoir for gas, water, apparatus for heating the rooms, etc., and surrounded by a garden of ten acres, would have cost, at the period of this history, scarcely five hundred thousand francs; and these details are still further confirmed by the opinion of an experienced builder especially consulted. This, then, is clearly proved, that for the price usually paid by workmen for their small lodgings, the same number of men might be comfortably and healthily accommodated by the owner of the building, who would receive ten per cent. for the interest of his money.

'Now,' says he, 'my workmen are comfortably lodged close to their work, consequently they enter upon their employment each day cheerful, and able to perform their labour; but that is not enough, the English workman, living upon good and solid food, and drinking excellent beer, can in the same space of time perform twice as much work as the French workman,[1] partaking only of a feeble and injurious nourishment, more enfeebling than strengthening, owing to the great adulteration of the articles employed. My work-people would then work better, in proportion as they were better fed; but how can I effect this? By acting upon the same plan as that adopted in barracks, schools, and in prisons, which is to club together, and so to provide a sum impossible to realise by any single effort, or without such a combination. Now if my 260 workmen, instead of each making a miserable attempt at cookery, would join, and only have one really good and excellent table, what an infinite advantage for them, and for me also. Two or three active, industrious women would be sufficient, with the assistance of children, to prepare the repasts. Then, instead of buying wood and coals in small quantities, and at almost double its price,[2] my work-people, with my guarantee for the payment (and I should always have security in their wages), might, by thus clubbing together, lay in large stocks of wood, flour, butter, oil, wine, etc., by purchasing them first-hand; by this means they would get pure and wholesome wine for three or four sous the bottle, instead of paying twelve or fifteen for a weak and adulterated beverage. Every week the Association would

[1] This was abundantly proved during the making of the railroad at Rouen; those French labourers who, having no family, chose to adopt the English mode of living, were able to perform almost double their usual labour when comforted and invigorated by an abundant and nourishing diet.

[2] We have already observed that the price of wood, when purchased at retail, costs nearly twice the sum paid by such as can buy it in large quantities; the same rule holds good with all articles bought in small quantities, both the fractional parts of the weight and price being taken in favour of the seller.

provide a live ox, and as many sheep as necessary. The housewives would make the bread after the country fashion, so that, by following out this plan, and observing due order and economy, my men might have for twenty or twenty-five sous a day a good and abundant living.' "

"Ah, M. Agricola, now it is all explained!"

"Oh, but you have not heard all, mademoiselle; our calculating speculator would thus continue the argument: 'So far I have managed to lodge, warm, and feed my work-people at half what they individually could accomplish it. Now, then, let us see what is to be done as to clothing them equally advantageously. In all probability my plan as regards these former arrangements will ensure their perfect health, and health is the workman's stock in trade. The Association I propose to form will then be in a condition to purchase, still under my guarantee for the payment (which their wages secure to me), at wholesale prices, warm and substantial materials, good, useful linen, and different species of stuffs, which the wives of the married men can make up into garments as well as a tailor could do. Then, so large a consumption of hats, caps, shoes, boots, etc., being required, the Association might obtain them at a very considerable reduction of price by purchasing them, either by contract, or of the manufacturer at trade prices.' Now, then, Mlle. Angèle, what say you to our speculatist?"

"I can only say," replied the person addressed, with most charming simplicity, "that what you tell me is almost beyond belief, and yet so simple that a child can understand it."

"You are right, for nothing is more simple than all well-directed actions, nothing more beautiful, and yet men seem to overlook that. Observe, however, that hitherto our man of business has spoken only with a view to his own particular interest, only looking upon

the personal advantages that would accrue to himself, taking no account of the value of fraternity, the solidity, the support to be derived from such an association, not reflecting that a state of comfort softens and improves the nature and character of man, never recalling to his mind the imperative duty which dictates to the strong to aid and support the weak, forgetting this one great maxim, 'That every honest, industrious, and active man has a positive right to exact from society both employment and wages proportionate to the wants of his condition.' No, no, the speculatist we have been considering thinks only of the net profit; yet, you see, he has found the way, not only to invest his money to the very best advantage, but also to secure most important advantages to his work-people."

"Yes, indeed, M. Agricola, I see that quite plainly."

"Then what will you say, when I shall have proved to you that our speculator has also a great interest in giving his workmen, in addition to their wages, a certain proportion in the profit he himself derives?"

"Oh, but, M. Agricola, that would be much more difficult for you to explain or me to understand!"

"Then favour me by listening a few minutes, and I am sure you will be convinced it is so."

While thus conversing, Angèle and Agricola had nearly reached the gate of the garden belonging to the Maison Commune.

An elderly woman, dressed very neatly though plainly, approached Agricola and said:

"Has M. Hardy returned to the manufactory yet, sir?"

"No, madame; but we expect him every minute."

"Do you think he will be here to-day?"

"To-day or to-morrow, madame."

"I suppose, sir, you cannot tell me at what hour to-morrow he is likely to be here?'

"I scarcely believe any one knows that; but the

porter belonging to the manufactory, who is also M. Hardy's porter, may very likely be able to tell you."

"Thank you kindly, sir."

"Good day, madame."

"M. Agricola," said Angèle, when the woman whose appearance had broken into their conversation was quite out of sight, "did it not strike you that the poor woman who has just left us was very pale and agitated?"

"I observed it equally with yourself, mademoiselle, and I even fancied I observed her eyes filled with tears."

"She did, indeed, look as though she had been weeping bitterly, poor thing. I dare say she came to ask some favour of M. Hardy; but what is the matter with you, M. Agricola, you appear quite sad?"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SECRET.

Agricola felt a vague presentiment that the visit of this elderly female, who looked so melancholy, might have some connection with the adventure of the young and pretty fair lady who, three days before, had come so disconsolate and wretched to make inquiries as to M. Hardy, and who had learned too late, perhaps, that she was watched and followed.

"Pardon me, mademoiselle," said Agricola to Angèle, "but the coming of this female reminded me of a circumstance of which, unfortunately, I cannot speak to you, as it is not my own secret."

"Oh, never mind, M. Agricola," replied the young girl, with a smile, "I am not inquisitive, and what you were telling me interests me so much that I have no wish to hear you speak of anything else."

"Well, then, mademoiselle, a few more words, and you will be as fully initiated into all the secrets of our Association as I am myself."

"I listen with pleasure, M. Agricola."

"Let us suppose, then, that some calculating speculator was talking; he would say: 'Here are my workmen in the best possible condition for working well, what is the next best step to take to obtain the largest profits? To make cheap — to sell dear. But there is no cheapness unless the raw material be purchased economically, unless the work itself be done in the best manner, and unless that work be done quickly. But, in spite of my

watchfulness, how can I prevent my workmen from wasting the raw material? How can I engage them, each in his particular department, to find out and use the most simple and least expensive method?'"

"True, M. Agricola, how is that to be done?"

"And that is not all; our man will say: 'In order to sell my produce very well they must be of the best, — irreproachable. My work-people do pretty well, that is not sufficient, they must produce masterpieces.'"

"But, M. Agricola, when their task is sufficiently well done, what interest have the workmen to overexert themselves in order to produce masterpieces?"

"That is the very phrase, Mlle. Angèle, what interest have they? Our speculator also says: 'My workmen must have an interest in economising the raw material, interest in employing their time fully, interest in discovering the best modes of production, interest, that what they produce shall be masterpieces. Then my aim is achieved. Well, let me interest my workmen in the profits which I derive from their economy, activity, zeal, and skill. The better they work, the better I shall sell; the better their share, the better also mine.'"

"Oh, now I understand, M. Agricola."

"And our speculator would speculate well. Before he was interested, the workman would say: 'Oh, it's of no consequence to me that I do more in the day or am better at the work; what do I gain by it? Nothing! Well, then, for a limited salary, limited duty. Now, on the contrary, I have an interest in exhibiting zeal and economy, and therefore the whole thing is changed. I redouble my activity, I stimulate that of others. If a comrade is idle and causes any injury to the factory, why, I have a right to say to him, "Brother, we are suffering more or less by your laziness or from the harm you are doing to our common interest."'"

"And, then, with what ardour, courage, and hope the work would be done, M. Agricola!"

"It is on that that our speculator has calculated, and he will say then: 'Treasures of experience and practical knowledge are often hidden in workshops for want of a good will, opportunity, or encouragement; excellent workmen, instead of putting out their skill, and making improvements as they can do so well, follow the old routine with indifference. How lamentable! For an intelligent man engaged all his life in some peculiar occupation must discover in progress of time a thousand modes of working better or faster. I will found, then, a sort of consulting committee to which I will nominate my principal overlookers and my best workmen; our interest is now common; and from this combination of practical intelligence much useful and new information must arise.' The speculator is not deceived, and soon struck by the incredible resources, the thousand and one new, ingenious, and perfect ideas, suddenly elicited by the workmen, 'You good-for-nothing fellows,' he exclaims, 'you knew all this and never told me! What has cost me these ten years a hundred francs to make has now only cost fifty francs besides an enormous saving of time.' 'Master,' replies a workman, who is as shrewd as his neighbour, 'what interest had I whether you saved fifty per cent. on an article or not? None! Now it is a different affair. You give me, besides my wages, a share in your profits; you elevate me in my own eyes by consulting my experience, my knowledge; instead of treating me as an inferior being, you take me into council; and now it is my interest, it is my duty, to tell you all I know, and to endeavour to learn more.' So you see, Mlle. Angèle, how the speculator would organise his workshops, so as to make his rivals ashamed of themselves, and envious of him. Now, if instead of this mere calculating speculator, we have a man who, joining to a knowledge of figures the tender and generous feelings of a noble heart and great elevation of mind, one who would expend his anxious

care, not only on the actual well doing, but the moral enlightenment of his workmen, seeking by every possible means to develop their understanding, elevate their hearts, and, strong in the authority with which his benevolence invests him, feeling deeply that he on whom depends the good or evil of three hundred human creatures should also look after their souls, should guide those whom he no longer calls his work-people, but his brothers, in the most straight and noble paths, should endeavour to excite in them a taste for learning, for all the arts which would render them happy and proud of a position which is but too often assumed by others with the tears of bitterness and of despair, — then, then, Mlle. Angèle, this man is — But, what do I see? He could not arrive more opportunely amongst us than whilst we were pronouncing a benediction. Here he is! It is M. Hardy!"

"Ah, Monsieur Agricola," said Angèle, drying her tears, "it is with hands clasped in gratitude that we ought to receive him."

"Look; see if that noble and benevolent face is not the image of his admirable heart!"

At this instant a travelling chariot, in which were M. Hardy and M. de Blessac, the unworthy friend who deceived him so infamously, entered the courtyard of the factory.

And now a few words in reference to the facts which we have endeavoured to narrate dramatically, and which are connected with the organisation of labour, — a question of paramount importance, and which will again occupy our attention before the end of this book.

In spite of the speeches, more or less official, of persons more or less serious (it seems to us as though this weighty epithet were somewhat abused), as to the increasing prosperity of the country, there is one fact beyond all dispute:

It is, that the working classes of society have never been more miserable, for wages have never been less adequate to the wants of those classes however moderate.

An indisputable proof of what we assert is found in the tendency, — and we cannot too highly praise that tendency, — which the rich classes are progressively making in order to aid and succour those who are suffering so much distress.

Charitable institutions, houses of refuge for poor children, philanthropic establishments, etc., prove sufficiently that the happy in this world foresee that, in spite of official assurances as to the state of general prosperity, terrible and threatening evils are fermenting in the depths of society.

How generous soever may be these isolated and individual attempts, they are and must be more than insufficient.

The persons in power can alone take the initiative effectually; but they carefully avoid it.

The serious people discuss seriously the importance of our diplomatic relations with Monomotapa, or some other matter equally serious; and they abandon to the chances of private commiseration, to the uncertainties of the good or bad inclination of capitalists and manufacturers, the fate more and more wretched of an immense, intelligent, and hard-working population, becoming hourly more and more enlightened as to their rights and their strength; and so depressed by the evils of a reckless rivalry, that they are often in want of the work which affords them at best but the scantiest means of existence!

Agreed, that the serious persons do not deign to think of these formidable miseries.

Statesmen smile with pity at the mere idea of attaching their names to an initiative, which would surround them with an overwhelming and delightful popularity.

Agreed, that all prefer to await the moment when the social question will burst like a clap of thunder.

Then, in the midst of this fearful commotion, which will shake the world, we shall see what will become of the serious questions and the serious men of our times.

To delay, or at least to drive back this awful future, we must then address ourselves to private sympathies in the name of happiness, of tranquillity, and the general safety.

We have said long since, if the rich but knew! Well, we repeat, to the honour of humanity, when the rich do know, they do good with intelligence and generosity.

Let us endeavour to prove to them, and to those, also, on whom depends the fate of an innumerable body of workmen, that they may be blessed and adored, without, indeed, loosening their purse-strings.

We have spoken of the Maison Commune, in which the workmen are lodged at such low rents, in salubrious and well-aired apartments.

This excellent institution was on the point of being realised in 1829, through the charitable intentions of Mlle. Amélie de Vitrolles.[1] At this time, in England, Lord Ashley is at the head of a company which has similar intentions, and offers to the shareholders a minimum of interest at 4*l.* per cent.

Why should not France follow such an example? An example which would have besides the advantage of giving to the poorer classes the first rudiments and the first means of association?

The immense advantages of living in common are manifest; they strike all minds; but the people themselves are not enabled to found establishments indispensable to these committees. What immense services, then, the rich would render by placing the working classes in a condition to enjoy these precious advantages! What consequence would it be to them to have built a house which would contain fifty sets of salubrious apartments, capable of containing families, provided the inter-

[1] See the *Démocratie Pacifique,* of the 19th October, 1844.

est of their money was assured? And it would be very easy to gurantee that.

Why does not the "Institut," which gives annually, as subjects of competition to young artists, plans of palaces, churches, theatres, etc., require the plan of a large establishment intended for the lodging of the working classes, who might there unite all the best advantages of economy and salubrity?

Why does not the Municipal Council of Paris, whose excellent intention and paternal anxiety for the suffering classes have been so often and so fully manifested, establish in the populous *arrondissemens* models of Maisons Communes, where they would try the first specimens of a life in common? The desire of being admitted into these establishments would be a powerful lever of emulation, morals, and also a comfort and hope for working people, and hope is something.

The city of Paris would thus make a good investment, do a good action, and, perhaps, by its example, the ruling powers might be induced to throw off their pitiless indifference.

Why, in fine, do not the capitalists who establish manufactories profit by that opportunity of uniting the Maisons Communes of the workmen to their mills or factories?

A very considerable advantage would accrue to the employers themselves in these times of desperate rivalry. In this way the reduction of salary is the more afflicting and unendurable for the workman, as he is deprived thereby of things of the first necessity; but if living alone, three francs are scarcely sufficient for his support, and the employer offers him the means of living with half that sum, thanks to this Association, the artisan's wages might, at the time of a commercial crisis, be reduced one-half without his feeling this diminution so severely; and it would be so much better than an entire stoppage of work and consequent cessation of wages.

We trust we have proved the advantage, utility, and facility of establishing Maisons Communes for workmen.

We have, then, established this:

That it would be not only of the strictest justice that the workman should participate in profits resulting from his labour and his intelligence, but that this just division would profit the master manufacturer himself.

We are not now putting forth hypotheses of projects easy to be realised, but are stating facts already accomplished.

One of our best friends, a very extensive manufacturer, whose heart is equal to his head, has established a consulting committee of work-people, and has allowed them (besides their wages) to enjoy a proportional share in the profits of his undertaking, and already have the results surpassed all hopes. In order to give to this excellent example every possible facility of execution, should any minds, at once sagacious and generous, desire to imitate him, we add at the end of this chapter the first regulations of this organisation.

We would only remark that the very primary rules of the establishment and other considerations have not at first allowed of all the work-people employed availing themselves of the profits so freely awarded to them, and which some day they will all enjoy.

We can affirm that, from the fourth meeting of this consulting committee, the worthy manufacturer, to whom we refer, had obtained such results from the appeal he made to the practical information of the workmen that he was enabled to calculate at once at thirty thousand francs (1,200*l.*) a year the profits which would result from the saving and improvement in the manufacture.

To sum up:

There is in every trade or calling three powers, three agents, three movers, whose rights should be equally respected:

The capitalist, who supplies the money.

The intelligent individual, who directs the working.
The workman, who produces the work.

Up to this time the workman has had but a very small portion, wholly inadequate to his wants. Would it not, therefore, be just, humane, to pay him better, and that directly or indirectly, either by facilitating the comfort which the Association offers, or by giving him a portion of the profit due to his labours?

Admitting, even at the worst, and after taking into consideration the ruinous effects of deadly rivalry, that this increase of salary would diminish, in some small degree, the profits of the employer and the director, would they not do, not only a generous and equitable thing, but even a profitable one, by placing their fortune and business out of the reach of all harm and injury, since they would have deprived the work-people of every legitimate excuse for disturbance, or of severe well-founded recriminations?

In a word, those persons appear to us always wise and prudent who insure their property against fire.

We have said that M. Hardy and M. de Blessac had arrived at the factory.

Shortly afterwards, from the Paris side, was seen advancing a humble hackney-coach, which drove towards the factory.

In this vehicle was Rodin.

The following are the main rules we have above referred to.

The regulation which treats of the functions of the committee is preceded by the following considerations as honourable for the master as the men:

"We are delighted to acknowledge that each supervisor, each overseer, and each workman contributes in his particular sphere of his labour to those qualities which are most conspicuous in the produce of our manu-

factures. They ought, therefore, to share in the profits they occasion, and continue to devote themselves to the progress which is still to be made. It is evident that a great benefit would result from the combination of the information and ideas of each. We have therefore formed the committee, whose comparative duties will be hereafter regulated.

"We have had for our object, in forming this institution, the increase by frequent exchange of ideas amongst the workmen, who, until now, have lived and worked almost entirely isolated the total of each one's knowledge, and to initiate them in the general principles of a wholesome and right administration. From this combination of the best strength of the workshop around the head of the establishment will arise the double profit of the intellectual and bodily amelioration of the workmen, and the increase of the prosperity of the manufacturer.

"Admitting, moreover, as just, that the exertion of each should be recompensed, we have resolved that, on the net profits of the house, all expenses and outgoings deducted, there shall be then deducted five per cent., which shall be divided in equal portions amongst the members of the committee (with the exception of the president, vice-president, and secretary), which shall be handed to them every year, on the thirty-first of December.

"This premium shall be increased one per cent. every time that the committee shall admit three fresh members.

"Morality, good conduct, skill, and various aptitudes for labour have determined our choice in selecting those workmen of whom we first form our committee. Granting these members the power of proposing the addition of fresh members, whose admission will be based on the same qualifications, and who will be elected by the committee itself, we would present to all the workmen of our

workshops an aim, which it will depend on themselves to attain, sooner or later.

"Their endeavours to fulfil all their duties by completing their work in the most perfect manner, and their behaviour out of working hours, will, in turns, open to them the door of the committee. They will also be entitled to enjoy a just and fair proportion in the advantages resulting from the success which our manufactures may obtain, — a success to which they will have contributed, and which cannot but increase through the good understanding and the fruitful rivalry which (we question not) will reign amongst the members of the committee."

Extract from the arrangements relative to the consulting committee, consisting of a president (supervisor of the establishment), a vice-president, a secretary, and fourteen members; four of whom are overseers, and ten workmen, of the most intelligent, in the various departments:

"Article 6. These members, when met, shall have the right to propose the addition of a new member, whose name shall be inscribed, in order that his admission be discussed at the following meeting. This admission shall be decided when, after ballot, the member proposed shall obtain two-thirds of the suffrages of the members assembled.

"Article 7. The committee shall, at its monthly sittings, occupy itself:

"1st. In finding the means to remedy the inconveniences which each day present themselves in manufacturing:

"2d. In proposing better and more economical means of establishing a fabric of goods, especially intended for exportation, and thus effectually, by the superiority of our make, to defeat foreign competition.

"3d. The means of arriving at the greatest degree

of economy in the use of materials, without injuring the strength and quality of the goods manufactured.

"4th. To propose and discuss propositions which shall be brought forward by the president, or other of the committee, looking especially to the improvements and perfection of the manufactures.

"5th. Finally, to place the price of the production in right equality with the real value of the goods produced."

We add, on our own part, that, according to the information which M. —— has kindly given us, the share of profit of each of his workmen (besides his regular wages) will be, at least, from three hundred to three hundred and fifty francs a year. We regret most poignantly that the modest feelings of M. —— do not allow us to reveal in these pages the name, as honourable as honoured, of the worthy individual who has set this admirable example.

CHAPTER XXII.

DISCLOSURES.

During the visit of Angèle and Agricola to the Maison Commune, the band of Loups, increasing in numbers as they advanced, by the addition of many idlers from the public-houses, had continued its progress towards the factory, whither also the hackney-coach which had brought Rodin from Paris was slowly advancing.

M. Hardy, descending from the carriage with his friend M. de Blessac, had entered the drawing-room of the house which he occupied close to the manufactory.

M. Hardy was of middle stature, elegantly and slightly made, and his appearance betokened a temperament essentially nervous and easily excited. His brow was high and expansive, his complexion pale, his eyes black, and equally expressive and penetrating, his physiognomy frank, intelligent, and attractive.

One word will paint the character of M. Hardy. His mother called him "the Sensitive Plant;" and, indeed, his was one of those exquisitely fine and delicate organisations, as expansive and affectionate as they were noble and generous, and so highly susceptible that, at the least harsh contact, they shrunk back and concentrated themselves in his breast.

When, united to this excessive sensibility, there existed a passionate love for the arts, a highly refined understanding, tastes essentially pure and unalloyed, we may imagine the thousand deceptions and frauds of which M. Hardy must have been the victim in his mercantile

career, and inquire how a heart so delicate and so tender had not been broken to pieces a thousand times in the incessant struggle against the most reckless and pitiless rivalries.

M. Hardy had, indeed, suffered severely. Compelled to follow a mercantile career, in order to continue honourably the affairs of his father, a model of rectitude and probity, whose affairs had been left somewhat in embarrassment owing to the events of 1815, he had acquired by his exertions and abilities one of the most highly honoured names in the mercantile world; but in order to achieve this end, what low cunning had he not to contend against, what perfidious rivalries to experience, what treacherous competition to encounter!

Excitable as he was, M. Hardy must have sunk a thousand times in his frequent experiences of painful indignation at baseness, of bitter disgust at dishonesty, but for the wise and firm support of his mother. On his return to her, after a day of painful struggle or hateful deception, he suddenly found himself transported into an atmosphere of purity so gracious, of serenity so entire, that he immediately lost the recollection of the tormenting things which had so deeply disgusted him during the day. The wounds of his mind were closed when he came into contact with the great and noble soul of his mother, and thus his love for her was little less than idolatry. When he lost her, he experienced one of those silent but deep shocks, like the griefs which never cease, and which, forming, as we may say, a part and parcel of our existence, have yet occasionally their days of melancholy sweetness.

A short time after this deep affliction, M. Hardy connected himself more closely with his workmen. He had always been just and kind to them, but although the void which his mother left in his heart must be ever unfilled, he felt a redoubled regard rise within him, experiencing the greater need to see around him happy

faces in proportion as he suffered; and then very soon the wonderful ameliorations which he applied for the physical and moral improvement of all around him served, not only as a relief, but as an occupation to his sorrow. Thus he gradually withdrew himself from the world, and concentrated his existence in three affections, — a tender and devoted friendship, which seemed to complete all his past friendships; a love as sincere and ardent as a last love; and a paternal attachment for his work-people.

His days passed, therefore, in the midst of the little world which he had filled with gratitude and respect for himself; a world which he had formed after his own views, in order to find therein a refuge from the painful realities which he so abhorred, and which comprised only good, intelligent, and happy beings, capable of responding to all the noble thoughts which had now become to him of greater and greater necessity.

Thus, after many sorrows, M. Hardy, arrived at the prime of life, possessing a sincere friend, a mistress worthy of his love, and knowing that he was assured of the deepest attachment of his work-people, had attained, at the moment of this recital, the utmost sum of felicity for which he could hope since his mother's decease.

M. de Blessac, the bosom friend of M. Hardy, had for a long time been worthy of his close and fraternal friendship and affection, but we have seen by what diabolical means the Père d'Aigrigny and Rodin had contrived to convert M. de Blessac (until then upright and sincere) into the tool of their dark machinations.

The two friends, who had suffered a little during their journey from the keenness of the north wind, were warming themselves before a good fire burning in the salon of M. Hardy.

"Oh, my dear Marcel, I am decidedly growing old," said M. Hardy, with a smile, as he addressed M. de

Blessac, "and I feel more than ever the want of home. To leave my usual occupations becomes decidedly painful, and I feel ill-disposed to everybody and everything that compels me to quit this happy corner of the earth."

"And when I remember," replied M. de Blessac, unable to keep down the slight colour that came to his cheek,—"when I remember, my friend, that it was for me that you undertook some time ago such a long journey!"

"Well, my dear Marcel, did you not in your turn come to accompany me in an excursion, which, without you, would have been as tiresome as it has been charming?"

"But, my dear friend, what a difference! I have contracted towards you a debt which I can never properly pay."

"Come, come, my dear Marcel, is there between us two any distinction of mine and thine? As regards feelings of attachment, is it not as delightful, as good, to give as to receive?"

"Noble heart! Noble heart!"

"Say happy heart. Oh, yes, happy in that affection for which its latest pulses must beat."

"And who should deserve happiness in this world, my dear friend, if it be not you?"

"To whom do I owe this happiness? To the affections which I have found here ready to sustain me, when, deprived of the support of my mother, who was my whole strength, I felt myself (I am ready to avow the weakness) almost incapable of supporting adversity."

"You, my friend, so firm, so determined in character, so resolute in doing good? You, whom I have seen struggling with as much energy as courage to carry out triumphantly an honest and just scheme?"

"True; but the more I advance in my career, the more do repulsive and disgusting things come before me, and call up my aversion, and the less do I feel my power of facing them."

"You would have courage enough, my dear friend, if any occasion presented itself."

"My dear Marcel," replied M. Hardy, with gentle and repressed emotion, "I have often told you my mother was my courage. When, my friend, I was with her, my heart torn by some black ingratitude, or revolted at some sordid cheatery, taking my two hands between her two venerable hands, she said to me, in sweet and serious voice, 'My dear child, it is rogues and villains who ought to be distressed; let us pity the wicked, let us publish the wickedness, but let us think only of the good.' Why, then, my friend, my heart, painfully smitten, expanded beneath the holy influence of this maternal advice, and every day I found in her presence the necessary strength to begin the next day that fierce struggle against the sad necessities of my condition. Fortunately God has willed it, that, after having lost this beloved mother, I have been able to attach to my existence those affections, without which, I confess, I should feel myself weak and unprotected, for you can scarcely believe, Marcel, the support, the strength I find in your friendship."

"Speak no more of me, my friend," continued De Blessac, hiding his own embarrassment. "Let us talk of another affection, almost as gentle and as tender as that of a mother."

"I understand you, my good Marcel," replied M. Hardy. "I have concealed nothing from you; because, in a most serious matter, I have had recourse to the counsels of your friendship. Yes, I think that every day of my life my adoration for that dear woman increases. She is the only one I have ever passionately loved, the only one whom now I shall ever love. And then, too, if I must tell all, my mother, ignorant of how dear Marguerite was to me, so often praised her, that her eulogy renders that love almost sacred in my eyes."

"And then, there are such strange coincidences between the character of Madame de Noisy and your

own, my friend, — her idolatry for her mother particularly!"

"True, Marcel; and this characteristic of Marguerite has often been to me a source of equal admiration and torment. How often has she said to me with her usual frankness, 'I have sacrificed all for you; but I would sacrifice you for my mother.'"

"*Dieu merci*, my friend, you can never fear that you will see Madame de Noisy exposed to that cruel struggle! Her mother has long since given up the idea, as you tell me, of returning to America, where M. de Noisy, who is perfectly careless about his wife, appears fixed for ever. Thanks to the discretion and devotion of the worthy woman who brought Marguerite up, your love is buried in the deepest mystery. What is there that could now trouble it?"

"Nothing, oh, nothing!" exclaimed M. Hardy. "I have even all but guarantees for its duration."

"What do you mean, my friend?"

"I do not know that I ought to tell even you."

"Am I indiscreet, my friend?"

"You, my dear Marcel? I never fancied so for a moment," said M. Hardy, in a friendly, but reproachful tone; "no, but I do not like to tell you of my happiness until it is complete; and there is still wanting something to complete the certainty of a particular project."

A servant entered at this moment, who said to M. Hardy:

"Sir, there is an old gentleman who desires to see you on very pressing business."

"Already!" said M. Hardy, with slight impatience. "Will you allow me, my friend?"

M. de Blessac rose to withdraw into another room; but M. Hardy stopped him, smiling, and saying, "No, no, remain. Your presence will hasten the interview."

"But if it be on business, my friend?"

"I transact that always openly, as you are aware." Then, turning to the servant:

"Desire the gentleman to come in."

"The postilion wishes to know if he may go," said the servant.

"Certainly not. He will have to take M. de Blessac to Paris; so let him wait."

The servant left the room, and returned immediately with Rodin, whom De Blessac did not know, as his own treachery had been arranged by another agent.

"M. Hardy?" said Rodin, bowing respectfully, and looking first at one and then at the other of the two friends.

"I am he, sir, at your service," replied the manufacturer, in a bland tone; for, at the sight of this old, humble, and meanly clad person, he thought he had come to ask for assistance.

"You, sir, François Hardy?" repeated Rodin, as if he wished to make quite sure of the identity of the person.

"I have already had the honour to inform you, sir, that I am he."

"I have a private communication to make to you, sir," said Rodin.

"You may speak out, sir; this gentleman is my friend," said M. Hardy, looking towards M. de Blessac.

"But it is to you, only, that I wish to speak, sir," replied Rodin.

M. de Blessac was about to retire, when M. Hardy retained him by a glance, saying kindly to Rodin, fearing that the presence of a third person might annoy him if he was about to ask for alms:

"Sir, allow me to ask if it is for you or myself that you require a secret interview?"

"For you, sir, — for you and you only," replied Rodin.

"Then, sir," replied M. Hardy, in extreme astonish-

ment, "you may speak out. I have no secrets from this gentleman."

After a momentary silence Rodin, addressing himself to M. Hardy, resumed the subject, saying:

"For you, sir, whom I know to be deserving of the universal esteem in which you are justly held, you have a claim upon the sympathy of every honest heart."

"I am glad you think so, sir."

"I do; and to prove my sincerity, I come as an honest, straightforward man, to render you a service."

"And may I inquire the nature of this service, sir?"

"It is to expose a vile and disgraceful deception practised on you, and by which you have been treacherously betrayed."

"You must be mistaken, sir!"

"Not at all. I have undeniable proofs of what I advance."

"Let me have these proofs."

"I tell you, sir, I have written evidence of the perfidy I come to unmask; in a word, you have been most basely deceived by a man you called your dearest friend!"

"And his name?"

"M. Marcel de Blessac!" replied Rodin.

The person thus alluded to started at these words as though a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet. A livid paleness overspread his features, and with difficulty he managed to stammer out, "Sir!"

Without even looking at his friend, or perceiving his excessive agitation and alarm, M. Hardy caught him by the hand, exclaiming in a tone of affectionate warmth:

"Silence, my dear friend!" Then, with indignation sparkling in his eyes, he cried to Rodin, whom he continued to gaze on with supreme contempt:

"So, then, it is M. de Blessac whom you accuse?"

"It is," answered Rodin, firmly.

"Do you know him?"

"I never saw him in my life!"

"Then how dare you presume to utter his name? And of what is it you dare to accuse him, — of betraying my friendship?"

"Two words, if you please, sir," said Rodin, with an agitation he appeared vainly striving to repress. "Supposing that one honourable man saw another equally honourable about to be murdered by a villain, would he be doing right or wrong in calling out for assistance, and giving the scoundrel into custody?"

"Of course he would, sir; but what connection can this case possibly have with — "

"In my opinion, sir, there are certain acts of treachery every bit as criminal as murder itself; and with those sentiments I am here to interpose between the executioner and his victim."

"Executioner! Victim!" exclaimed M. Hardy, more and more bewildered and surprised. "What words are these?"

"I presume you are well acquainted with the handwriting of M. de Blessac," said Rodin.

"I am, sir."

"Then, read this," said Rodin, taking from his pocket a letter, which he presented to M. Hardy, who, for the first time casting his eyes towards his friend, was petrified at beholding the mortal paleness of his countenance; in truth, M. de Blessac possessed not the daring effrontery requisite for such as engage in treacherous proceedings, and felt all the speechless agony of one who felt that the hour of exposure was at hand.

"Marcel!" exclaimed M. Hardy, in great alarm and perturbation at this unexpected sight. "Marcel! for heaven's sake, what means your silence — your paleness?"

"Marcel!" exclaimed Rodin, feigning the most painful astonishment. "Is it possible this gentleman can be M. de Blessac? Oh, if I had but known that!"

"Do you not hear what this man says, Marcel?" cried M. Hardy, seizing the hand of M. de Blessac; "he asserts that you have shamefully deceived and wronged me!"

But the hand he grasped was cold and clammy as that of a corpse.

"God of heaven!" continued M. Hardy, shrinking back with a horrible dread of he scarcely knew what; "he speaks not — he attempts not to reply!"

"Since I find myself in the presence of M. de Blessac," said Rodin, "I find myself obliged to ask him if he can venture to deny having addressed several letters to the Rue Milieu-des-Ursins in Paris, under cover to M. Rodin."

M. de Blessac still preserved silence.

Unwilling to credit either his eyes or his ears, M. Hardy convulsively tore open the letter given him by Rodin, and hastily perused a few lines, occasionally breaking out into exclamations abundantly expressive of the deep anguish he endured. He had no need to complete the reading of the whole epistle, to receive the most perfect conviction of the black treachery of M. de Blessac. Overpowered by the incontrovertible evidence of the letter, and staggering beneath the dreadful certainty it afforded of the infamous deception and perfidious conduct practised towards him by one he had so loved and trusted, the brain of M. Hardy seemed almost to give way under so fearful a blow. His senses seemed forsaking him, and his very blood seemed curdling around his heart as he glanced at the abyss of shame and misery dug by the friend he would have defended with his life. The dreadful letter fell from his trembling hands; but to this first shock succeeded a paroxysm of rage, indignation, and contempt, and seizing M. de Blessac with one hand, he exclaimed, while raising the other in a threatening attitude, "Villain!" Then suddenly arresting the intended blow, he said, with terrifying calmness, "No, I should disgrace my hand were I to allow it to touch

you!" then added, turning towards Rodin, who was hastily advancing to interpose, "'Tis not in buffeting the cheek of a cowardly traitor I should employ myself, but in warmly and cordially grasping yours, my good sir, who have had the courage to unmask a traitor and a coward!"

"Sir!" cried M. de Blessac, sinking with shame, "I am at your disposal — I wait your commands — and — "

He stopped, utterly unable to utter another syllable. A noise of persons speaking resounded from without the door, which opened violently, and an aged female rushed in, spite of all the efforts made by a servant to prevent her, saying, in an agitated tone, "I tell you I must speak to your master this very minute!" At the sound of the voice and the appearance of the pale, trembling, and distressed woman who stood before him, M. Hardy forgot alike M. de Blessac, Rodin, and the treachery practised upon himself. Starting with alarm and surprise, he exclaimed:

"Madame Dupau, what has occurred? What brings you here?"

"Alas, monsieur, a great — a heavy misfortune!"

"Marguerite?" exclaimed M. Hardy, in heartrending tones.

"She has gone, sir."

"Gone!" repeated M. Hardy, as struck with terror as though the ground had opened beneath his feet.

"Marguerite gone?" cried he.

"All is discovered, and three days ago she was taken away by her mother," said the unhappy woman, in faltering tones.

"Gone! Marguerite gone!" persisted M. Hardy. "Oh, it is not — it cannot be true! You are deceiving me!" And, without waiting for one word of explanation, he rushed, bewildered and distracted, out of the house, hastened to the courtyard, where his carriage, to which post-horses had been attached, was waiting for M. de

Blessac, and springing up into it, said to the postilion, "To Paris with all the speed you can!"

At the moment when the vehicle was proceeding with the rapidity of lightning along the road to Paris, the strong wind which prevailed brought the distant noise made by the Loups, as they loudly chanted forth their war-song, while hurrying onwards to attack the manufactory.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ATTACK.

When M. Hardy had left the factory, Rodin, who had not anticipated this abrupt departure, was going slowly towards his coach, when suddenly he paused for a moment, starting with joy and surprise at seeing at some distance from him the Marshal Simon and his father going towards one of the wings of the Maison Commune, for a circumstance had delayed, until this moment, the conversation of the father and son.

"Good!" said Rodin; "very good — better and better; and now if my man has but found out and decided the little Rose-Pompon!"

At this instant, the wind, which was rising, brought to the Jesuit's ear the nearer sound of the war-song of the Loups.

After having listened a moment very attentively to this distant noise, with his foot on the step of the carriage, Rodin said, as he seated himself in the vehicle:

"The worthy Joshua Van Daël of Java little thinks, at this moment, that his bills on the Baron Tripeaud are in a fair way to become valuable."

And then the hackney-coach went towards the barrier.

Several workmen, who were on the point of starting for Paris to convey the reply of their comrades to certain propositions relative to secret societies, had been under the necessity of having a private conversation with the

father of Marshal Simon, and hence the delay in his conversation with his son.

The old workman, the foreman of the factory, occupied two very nice rooms on the ground floor, at the extremity of one of the wings of the Maison Commune; a small garden of about sixty feet square, which he amused himself by cultivating, was close under his windows. The glass door which led to this flower bed was open, and allowed the sunbeams, which were warm for the month of March, to penetrate the simple apartment, into which the artisan in his blouse, and the Marshal of France in his full uniform, now entered. Then the marshal, taking his father's hands in his own, said to him, in a voice so sad that the old man started at it:

"Father, I am very unhappy," and a painful expression, until then repressed, suddenly darkened the noble features of the marshal.

"You unhappy?" exclaimed the elder Simon, with uneasiness, and going close towards him.

"I will tell you all, my father," replied the marshal, in a tremulous voice; "for I require the counsel of your inflexible integrity."

"With respect to honour and loyalty, you have no occasion to ask counsel of any one."

"Yes, my father, you only can draw me from an uncertainty which is most agonising torture to me."

"Explain yourself, and quickly, I entreat."

"For some days my daughters have appeared under some constraint — dejected. During the first moments of our meeting, they were wild with joy and happiness; all at once that has changed, and they are each day more and more sad. Yesterday I surprised a tear in their eyes, and when, filled with emotion, I clasped them to my heart, entreating them to tell me their grief, they made no reply, but threw their arms around my neck and bedewed my cheeks with tears."

"That is very strange. To what can you attribute this change?"

"Sometimes I fear that I have not sufficiently concealed from them my sorrow at their mother's death; and the dear angels, perhaps, mourn because they see themselves insufficient for my happiness. Yet, strange to say, they seem not only to understand, but to share my sorrow. Yesterday Blanche said to me, 'How happy we should all be again if our mother was with us!'"

"They share your grief and do not reproach you for it. The cause of their melancholy has another source."

"So I say, father, but what can it be? My imagination is exhausted in trying to find it out. What shall I say? Sometimes I go so far as to imagine that some fell demon has glided in between me and my children. The idea is stupid, absurd, I know; but when sound reason is at fault, we sometimes give ourselves up to the wildest suppositions."

"Who could desire to come between you and your children?"

"No one — that I know well enough."

"Come, come, Pierre," said the old workman, paternally; "wait — have patience — watch and scrutinise these poor young hearts with that solicitude which you feel, and I will answer for it you will discover some secret, no doubt, very innocent."

"Yes," said the marshal, looking steadfastly at his father; "yes, but to penetrate this secret, I ought never to quit them."

"Why do you quit them?" inquired the old man, surprised at the mournful air of his son. "Are you not now to be always with them — with me?"

"Who knows?" replied the marshal, with a sigh.

"What do you mean?"

"Why in the first place, father, you know all the duties that keep me here. You know, too, those which

may remove me from you, from my daughters, and my other child."

"What child?"

"The son of my old friend, the Indian prince."

"Djalma? Has anything happened to him?"

"Father, he alarms me."

"He?"

At this moment a loud noise, brought up by a violent gust of wind, was heard in the distance; the uproar was so great that the marshal paused a moment, then added:

"What can that be?"

After having for an instant listened to the deadened sounds, which became weaker and passed away with the wind, the old man said:

"Some noisy, tipsy singers from the Barriers, who are roving about."

"The sounds appeared to come from a large body of persons," replied the marshal.

He and his father again listened, but the noise had ceased.

"You were saying," resumed the old workman, "that this young Indian alarmed you. In what way?"

"I have told you, father, of his mad and unhappy passion for Mlle. de Cardoville."

"And does that frighten you, my son?" asked the old man, looking at him with surprise. "Djalma is only eighteen years of age, and at his time of life one passion drives out the other."

"If it were a mere commonplace love, father, you would say truly; but reflect, to the most dazzling beauty Mlle. de Cardoville, as you know, unites the most noble, most generous disposition; and by a series of fatal circumstances—oh, yes, most fatal—Djalma has had an opportunity of appreciating the rare value of this elevated soul."

"You are right; and this is more serious than I thought it was."

"You have no idea of the ravages which this passion

has made on this ardent and untamable child. Sometimes to his painful depression there succeeds the excitement of the most savage ferocity. Yesterday I surprised him suddenly; with bloodshot eye, his features spasmodic with rage, and giving way to the gusts of a wild frenzy, he was stabbing, with his poniard, a red cloth cushion, exclaiming, in a breathless voice, 'Oh, blood — I have his blood!' 'In Heaven's name!' I exclaimed, 'what means this madness?' 'I am killing the man,' he replied, in a gloomy voice and with a wild air. He meant some rival whom he thought he had."

"There is really something terrible in such a passion, in such a heart," said the old man.

"At other times," continued the marshal, "he directs his rage against Mlle. de Cardoville, and then at others, against himself. I have been obliged to remove all his arms, for a man who came from Java, with him and who appears much attached to him, told me that he suspected that he had some thoughts of suicide."

"Unhappy boy!"

"Well, my father," said Maréchal Simon, with deep bitterness, "it is at the moment when my daughters and this child of my adoption demand all my care that I am, perhaps, on the eve of forsaking them."

"Forsaking them?"

"Yes, to satisfy a duty which is even more sacred than those imposed on us by friendship or ties of blood," said the marshal, with an accent so grave and solemn that his father, full of emotion, exclaimed:

"What duty is it?"

"Father," said the marshal, after remaining pensive for a moment, "Who made me what I am? Who gave me the title of duke, the bâton of marshal?"

"Napoleon!"

"For you, a stern republican, I know he lost all his prestige, when, from the first citizen of a republic, he became emperor."

"I lamented the weakness," sighed old Simon, "that converted a demigod into a man."

"But for me, father, for me, a soldier, who have fought constantly by his side, under his eyes; for me, whom he raised from the lowest ranks of the army to the highest; for me, whom he overwhelmed with kindness and affection, he was ever more than a hero. He has been a friend; and there was as much gratitude as admiration in my idolatry of him. Exiled, I would have shared his exile; but the favour was refused me! Then I conspired and drew my sword against those who had despoiled his son of the crown which France had given him."

"And in your position you did rightly, Pierre; for, without sharing your admiration, I understand your gratitude, projects of exile, conspiracy. I have approved of all, as you well know."

"Well, this disinherited son, in whose name I have conspired, is seventeen years of age, and now able to wield his father's sword."

"Napoleon II.!" exclaimed the old man, looking at his son with extreme surprise and anxiety. "The King of Rome!"

"King! No, he is no longer King Napoleon, — no, he is no longer called Napoleon, they have given him some Austrian name; for they were afraid of his other name — everything makes them afraid; and so, do you know what they are doing with the emperor's son?" inquired the marshal, with painful excitement. "They are torturing him, — killing him by inches!"

"Who told you this?"

"Oh, one who knows, and who has said the truth — the dreadful truth. Yes, the emperor's son is struggling with all his might against a premature death; his eyes are turned towards France; he waits — waits, and no one goes to him — no one; not one amongst all the men whom his father has made as great as they were

once small; not one — not one thinks of the consecrated child whom they are choking, and who is dying."

"And you — you think — "

"Yes; but to think of it, it was necessary that I should know. Yes, not to have a doubt on the point. And it was not from the same source that I gathered my information, that I might accurately learn the cruel fate of this boy, to whom I have taken an oath; for one day, as I told you, the emperor, the proud and fond parent, pointing to him in his cradle, said to me, 'My old friend, you will be to the son as you have been to the father! for those who love us love our France also.'"

"Yes, I know it. You have often repeated those words to me; and, like yourself, I have been moved by them."

"Well, father, if, learning as I have done, how the son of the emperor suffers, — I have seen, seen to a certainty, the most convincing proofs that I am not deceived, — if I have seen a letter from a high personage, at the court of Vienna, who offers to a man faithful to the worship of the emperor the means of entering into communication with the King of Rome, and, perhaps, of rescuing him from his executioners — "

"And then," said the artisan, looking steadfastly at his son, "when once Napoleon II. is free?"

"Then!" exclaimed the marshal; and then dropping his voice, he added: "Why, father, do you think that France is insensible to the humiliation she endures? Do you believe the remembrance of the emperor is worn out? No, no; it is in these days of abasement for our country that his sacred name is silently invoked. What would it be, then, if this glorious name again appeared on the frontier, revived in his son? Do you not believe that the heart of all France would beat for him?"

"This is a conspiracy against the existing government, with Napoleon II. as the war-cry," replied the old man. "It is a serious matter."

"Father, I told you that I was very unhappy; well, am I not?" cried the marshal. "Not only do I ask myself if I ought to abandon my children and you, to throw myself into all the hazards of so daring an enterprise; but I ask myself, whether I am not pledged to the existing government, which, in recognising my title and my rank, has not favoured me, but only rendered me tardy justice. What ought I to do? To abandon all I love dearest, or remain insensible to the tortures of the emperor, — that emperor to whom I am everything, to whom, personally, I have sworn fidelity both to himself and his child? Ought I to lose this only occasion of, perhaps, saving him? Or ought I not to conspire for him? Tell me if I exaggerate what is due to the memory of the emperor. Speak, my father, — decide. During the whole sleepless night I have endeavoured to single out of this chaos the right line prescribed by honour; and yet I have gone from one indecision to another. You only, my father, I repeat it, you alone can guide me."

After remaining for a few instants lost in reflection, the old man was about to reply to his son, when some person, after having run across the small garden, opened the door on the ground floor, and entered with great consternation into the room in which Marshal Simon and his father were.

It was Olivier, the young workman who had escaped from the public-house in the village, where the Loups had assembled.

"M. Simon! M. Simon!" he exclaimed, pale and breathless. "They are here! They are come! They are going to attack the factory!"

"Who?" cried the old man, rising quickly.

"The Loups, some quarrymen and stone-masons, and a crowd of idlers and vagabonds, who have joined them on their way. Hark, don't you hear them? They are calling out 'Death to the Dévorans!'"

In fact the noises grew nigher and nigher.

"It was their noise I heard just now," said the marshal, also rising from his chair.

"There are more than two hundred, M. Simon," said Olivier. "They are armed with stones and clubs; and, unfortunately, the greater part of the workmen of the factory are in Paris. There are not forty of us left; the women and children have run to their apartments shrieking with affright. Don't you hear them?"

And the ceiling resounded beneath the hasty footsteps.

"Will they really make the attack in earnest?" said the marshal to his father, who grew more and more uneasy.

"I have no doubt of it," replied the old man. "There is nothing more fierce than these quarrels of companionship; and, moreover, for some time past, every mode has been employed to excite the people of the vicinity against the factory."

"If you are so inferior in numbers," said the marshal, "we must first barricade all the doors, and then —"

He could not finish. A loud burst of savage cries made the very glasses in the window-frames shake, and so near and so astounding that the marshal, his father, and the young workman went out instantly into the garden, bounded on one side by a tolerably high wall, which was bounded by the fields.

Suddenly, and then the violence, the shoutings, and uproar redoubled, a shower of stones and numerous flints, intended to break the windows of the house, smashed in several panes on the first floor, and, glancing back on the wall, fell in the garden, where the marshal and his father were standing.

Singular fatality! The old man was struck on the head by a large stone, and staggered, then, stooping forward, fell all bleeding into the arms of Marshal Simon, at the same moment that there resounded without, with increasing fury, the fierce cries of "Battle and death to the Dévorans!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LOUPS AND THE DÉVORANS.

It was a fearful thing to see this unrestrained mob whose first hostilities had been so disastrous to Marshal Simon's father.

One wing of the Maison Commune, where the garden wall ended on that side, looked on to the open fields; and it was here that the Loups had begun their attack.

The haste of the march, the halts which the troop had made at two public-houses on the way, the burning impatience of the struggle which was imminent, had more and more urged these men to fierce excitement.

The first volley of stones having been thrown, the majority of the assailants looked for fresh weapons on the ground; some, to pick up their supplies with greater ease, held there sticks between their teeth, others had put them against the wall; and here and there several groups clustered tumultuously around the ringleaders of the party. The best clothed of these men wore blouses, or smock-frocks, with caps, some were covered only with rags; for, as we have already narrated, a considerable number of the idlers of the Barriers, and vagabonds of all descriptions, with hang-dog countenances, had joined the troop of Wolves from idleness or curiosity. Several hideous women, clad in squalid tatters, who seemed to start up suddenly to accompany this villainous mob, associated with them, and, by their shrieks and language, still more inflamed their excited minds. One of these, tall, stout, with purple complexion, drunken eyes,

and toothless gums, had a handkerchief bound around her head, from beneath which her yellow and dishevelled hair escaped in tangled masses. She had a ragged gown, and a brown check shawl crossed over her breast and tied in a knot behind her back. This hag seemed greatly enraged. She had tucked up her torn sleeves; in one hand she brandished a thick club, and in the other she held a large stone. Her companions called her *Ciboule* (Onion).

This horrible wretch exclaimed, in a hoarse voice:

"How I long to bite the women of this factory! I'll bleed 'em!"

These savage words were received with loud applause by her companions, and with brutal shouts of "*Vive Ciboule!*" which excited her still more madly.

Amongst the other ringleaders was a little thin man, pale and weasel-faced, having his black beard all around his chin and throat. He wore a scarlet Greek cap; and his long new blouse covered a very well-made pair of cloth trousers, and boots of best quality. This man was evidently of a different class in life to the others of the mob; and it was he who particularly took the lead in charging the workmen of the factory with behaving ill to, and speaking ill of, the inhabitants of the environs,—he shouted loudly, but had neither stick nor stone. A stout man, with very red face, and whose bass voice seemed as if it belonged to a chorister, said to him:

"What, then you will not fire on these impious hounds, whose sins may draw down the cholera on the country, as monsieur the curé says!"

"I will fire better than you," replied the weasel-faced man, with a peculiar and sinister smile.

"And what will you fire with?"

"Perhaps with this stone," replied the little man, plucking up a large flint; but as he stooped, a bag, nearly filled, but very light, which appeared to have been fastened under his blouse, fell to the ground.

"Mind, you'll lose your bag and your marbles," said the other, "though it does not seem very heavy."

"They are samples of wool," replied the weasel-faced man, plucking up the bag with much haste, and concealing it as quickly as possible under his blouse; then he added, "But attention, for I think the quarrier is going to speak."

The individual who exercised the most complete ascendancy over this excited assemblage was this fierce quarrier. His gigantic height so completely elevated him above the multitude that they could always see his enormous head enveloped in a ragged red handkerchief; his herculean shoulders, covered with a yellow goatskin, elevated above the rest of this malevolent and swarming crowd, which was interspersed here and there with women's caps, like so many white points.

Seeing to what a pitch of exasperation the multitude had reached, the small number of honest but mistaken workmen, who had been dragged into the dangerous enterprise, under a pretence of a companionship quarrel, dreading the consequences of the struggle, endeavoured, but too late, to leave the party; but environed and huddled together in the midst of the most hostile of the group, fearing to be branded as cowards, or to be attacked by the majority of the party they had joined, were awaiting the most favourable opportunity to effect their escape.

A profound silence succeeded the savage shouts which had accompanied the first volley of stones, which was broken by the stentorian voice of the quarrier.

"The Wolves have howled," he exclaimed; "we will wait a moment and see if the Dévorans will reply and give battle."

"We must get them all out of the factory, and try and make them fight on neutral ground," said the little weasel-faced man, who appeared to be the "standing counsel" of the band, "or else it will be a violation of domicile."

"Violation! What do we care for violation?" cried the horrible hag called Ciboule; "either inside or outside, I will tear out some of the eyes of those polecats in the factory."

"Yes, yes," shouted the other hideous beldams, as ragged and raving as Ciboule, "yes, you men are not to have it all to yourselves."

"We will have our share!"

"The women of the factory say that all the women of the neighbourhood are drunkards and —" exclaimed the little weasel-faced man.

"We'll pay 'em off for that!"

"We women must have our share in the battle!"

"This is our affair!"

"As they have singers in their Maison Commune," shouted Ciboule, "we'll teach them the air of '*au secours, on m'assassine*' (help, I am being murdered!)"

This brutal jest was hailed with cries, bravos, and tremendous stamping of feet, to which the stentor voice of the quarrier put an end by shouting, "Silence!"

"Silence — silence!" echoed the crowd. "Hark to the quarrier!"

"If the Dévorans are such curs as not to dare to venture out after the second volley of stones, there is a door I see there, — we will break in by that, and trace them to their holes."

"It would be better to draw them out to fight, so that not one of them remain in the interior of the factory," said the little weasel-faced man, who evidently had some design in what he suggested.

"Oh, let's fight where we can!" exclaimed the quarrier, with a voice of thunder; "so that we can get them to 'the scratch,' — that's all! We can fight on the edge of a wall or the roof of a house, can't we, Wolves?"

"Yes, yes!" said the mob, excited by the quarrier's savage air; "if they won't come out, we'll force our way in."

"We'll see the inside of their palace!"

"These pagans haven't even a chapel," said the bass voice; "M. le Curé has damned them all."

"Why should they live in a palace, and we in dog-holes?"

"Why, Hardy's work-people say that dog-holes are too good for such scum of the earth as you," cried the little man with the weasel-face.

"Yes, yes, they did say so!"

"Then we'll smash everything before us!"

"We'll demolish their fine bazar!"

"We'll turn their house out of windows!"

"And when we have made the —— sing one of their squalling ditties," screamed Ciboule, "we will teach them how to dance with stones on their heads."

"Now then, my Loups, attention!" cried the quarrier, in his stentorian voice, "one volley more, and if the Dévorans will not leave their holes, then down with the door."

This proposition was received with the most fierce uproar, and the quarrier, whose voice was heard above the tumult, exclaimed at the top of his powerful lungs:

"Now, then, Wolves, attention! Stones in hand, and together! Are you ready?"

"All ready!"

"Then fire!"

And, for the second time, a cloud of stones and heavy flints was dashed furiously against the façade of the Maison Commune, which looked into the fields. Some of those projectiles broke the window-panes which had escaped the first attack; and to the sharp sound of the smashed windows were added fierce shouts, all uttered simultaneously and like a threatening chorus, by this crowd, drunken by its own excess.

"Battle and death to the Dévorans!"

But these cries became literally frantic when, through the broken windows, the assailants saw women, who

were passing and repassing, running backwards and forwards, full of alarm, some carrying children, others tossing their arms in the air and calling for help, whilst some, more bold, opened the windows and stooped out, in order to try and close the exterior shutters.

"Are these not the ants moving?" shouted Ciboule, stooping to pick up a stone; "we will help them to a few flints!"

And the stone flung by the masculine and practised hand of the beldam struck an unlucky woman who, leaning out of the window, was trying to draw the shutter towards her.

"A hit! I have touched the bull's-eye!" exclaimed the hideous creature.

"Well aimed — well hit, Ciboule!" cried a voice.

"Ciboule for ever!"

"Come out, you Dévorans, if you dare!"

"You have said a hundred times that the people of the neighbourhood were too great cowards even to come and look at your house," said the little weasel-faced man.

"They're making up their minds!"

"If they won't come out," shouted the quarrier, in a voice of thunder, "we'll smoke 'em out!"

"Yes, so we will!"

"Let us drive in the door!"

"We must find 'em!"

"Come on — come on!"

And the crowd, headed by the quarrier, who was closely followed by Ciboule, brandishing a stick, marched forward with a loud uproar, towards a large door which was at a short distance.

The resounding earth seemed to tremble beneath the hasty trampling of the mob, which was then silent; and this confused and, as it were, subterranean noise seemed even more threatening than the loud shouting.

The Loups soon reached the door, which was of massive oak.

At the moment when the quarrier raised his heavy stone-cutter's hammer to strike against one of the folding doors, it suddenly opened.

Some of the more resolute of the assailants were about to rush in by this entrance, but the quarrier retreated, extending his arms as if to moderate their ardour, and silence his party, who then grouped and collected themselves around him.

The half opened door revealed a body of workmen (unfortunately but very few), whose countenances bespoke resolution. They were hastily armed with pitchforks, iron tongs, and sticks. Agricola, at their head, held in his hand his heavy smith's hammer.

The young workman was very pale, but it was easy to see by the sparkle of his eyes, his bold air, and his determined demeanour that his father's blood was boiling in his veins, and that, in such a struggle, he would become a terrible antagonist. Yet he restrained himself and said to the quarrier in a firm voice:

"What do you want?"

"Battle!" shouted the quarrier, with a voice of thunder.

"Yes, yes! — battle!" echoed the crowd.

"Silence, my Wolves!" cried the quarrier, turning around, and spreading his large hand towards the multitude.

Then addressing Agricola:

"The Wolves demand battle."

"With whom?"

"With the Dévorans."

"There are no Dévorans here," replied Agricola, — "there are none but peaceable workmen, so retire!"

"Well, then, the Wolves will eat the peaceable workmen."

"The Wolves will not eat any one," said Agricola, looking full in the face at the quarrier, who approached him with a threatening aspect; "and the Wolves will make none afraid but little children."

"Oh, you think so?" said the quarrier, with a ferocious grin.

Then uplifting his heavy stone-cutter's hammer, he put it close to Agricola's nose, saying:

"Is this a thing to laugh at?"

"And this?" said Agricola, who, by a rapid motion, met and vigorously repulsed the stone-cutter's hammer with his smith's hammer.

"Iron against iron — hammer against hammer! I like that," said the quarrier.

"We do not know or care for what you like," replied Agricola, hardly containing himself; "you have broken our windows, frightened our women, and wounded, perhaps, killed, the oldest workman in the factory, who is at this moment in his son's arms," and Agricola's voice quivered in spite of himself; "that is enough, I should think."

"No; the Wolves are more hungry than that," replied the quarrier; "you must come out from where you are, you set of curs, into the open field, and give us battle."

"Yes, battle! Make them come out! Battle, battle!" shouted the mob, groaning, whistling, shaking their sticks, and closing up, so as to narrow still more the small space which separated them from the door.

"We do not want any fighting," replied Agricola, "and we shall not leave this place; but, if you are foolhardy enough, pass this;" and Agricola threw his cap on the threshold, and put his foot on it with an intrepid air. "Yes; if you pass this, then you will attack us in our home, and you will be responsible for all that happens."

"In your home or elsewhere, we will fight it out. The Wolves will eat the Dévorans; and so now for your attack," said the savage quarrier, raising his hammer against Agricola.

But the latter, moving aside by a rapid motion of his body, avoided the blow, and dashed his hammer at the breast of the quarrier, who was driven back a step or two, but, recovering his balance, rushed furiously at Agricola, shouting, "Forward, my Wolves!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RETURN.

The contest between Agricola and the quarryman was the signal for a general *mêlée* of the most determined and sanguinary kind. A dense mass of the assailants, following closely in the quarrier's wake, pressed towards this point of attack with irresistible fury; while a considerable portion of the besiegers, unable to pass the confused heap of struggling beings, who were trampling on each other in fearful confusion, — the stronger pitilessly crushing his fallen brethren without compunction or remorse, — broke down a trellis which surmounted a hedge, and, pouring in upon the astonished workmen belonging to the factory, in a manner hemmed them in between two fires. For a time the attacked party resisted courageously; but, perceiving Ciboule, followed by some of her horrible associates and a quantity of the loose hangers-on of the Barriers, whose evil countenances sufficiently attested their lawless designs, rushing up the staircase leading to the Maison Commune, where the women and children had taken refuge, the greater number precipitately pursued, in dread of the consequences to the weaker part of the establishment. Seeing the interruption offered to their progress, some of Ciboule's companions turned quickly around upon the workmen, and effectually cut off the pursuit by the staircase; while the hag herself, attended by a rabble of both sexes, made their way, without molestation, into the

chambers they approached, plundering or destroying all that fell in their way.

A door, which at first resisted their efforts, was quickly broken open; and Ciboule, brandishing her staff, and half wild with savage triumph, rushed in, her lank locks floating over her hideous countenance. Within the apartment was a second door, conducting to an inner apartment, and before it knelt a beautiful girl (it was Angèle), who seemed as though she had previously endeavoured to defend the entrance against the intruders, by throwing her slender weight against the door by which the rioters had entered. Pale as marble, the terrified girl, without rising from her knees, exclaimed, in supplicating tones:

"I implore of you not to harm my mother!"

"No, no!" screamed the disgusting hag, "we will tackle you first; your mother shall come next!" and, suiting the action to the word, Ciboule grasped the half fainting girl in her hard, coarse grasp, while the rest of her companions occupied themselves in smashing the various articles of furniture with their bludgeons, or in stealing whatever was portable. Struggling alike to escape from the infuriated rage of Ciboule, and to prevent her entering the chamber in which her mother had taken refuge, Angèle uttered loud and piercing cries; while her parent, leaning from her window, called upon Agricola to come to their assistance. The smith had commenced a second deadly encounter with the quarryman. Their hammers were useless in the close quarters to which they had now come. With glaring eyeballs and clenched teeth, they fought with deadly and determined fury; chest against chest; wrestling, twisting in each other's firm embrace; both striving by every art to throw his antagonist. Agricola, who was stooping, held the left leg of his adversary under his right arm, having accomplished this manœuvre when bending to avoid a violent kick aimed at him by his enemy; but such was the her-

culean power possessed by the chief of the Loups, that, although obliged to support himself entirely on one leg, he stood fixed and immovable as a tower of stone. With the hand which was free (the other was gripped by Agricola as though fixed in a vice) he sought, by repeated blows, to break the jaws of the young smith, who, with bent head, was using his forehead with all his might against the hollow of his adversary's chest.

"Here goes to knock all the teeth out of the Dévorant's mouth!" cried the quarrier. "He will neither eat his own bread nor that of the Loups for the future!"

"You are no Loup!" exclaimed the young smith, redoubling his efforts. "The real Loups are brave fellows, who would be ashamed to fight ten men against one."

"Loup or not, I mean to smash your teeth for you!"

"Take care I do not first spoil you for breaking into people's dwellings, by sending you home lame of a leg."

So saying, the smith dealt so violent a blow on the quarryman's leg, that, uttering a scream of agony, the latter, suddenly stretching out his head, bit Agricola deep on the side of his neck, with all the savage fury of a wild beast. The sudden agony occasioned by this brutal attack caused the smith to let go his assailant's leg; when, making an almost superhuman effort, the quarryman threw himself, with all his weight, upon Agricola, who staggered, and fell under him.

At this instant the mother of Angèle, leaning from one of the upper windows, screamed out in accents of distress, "Help! help! M. Agricola, my child is being murdered!"

"Let me go!" exclaimed Agricola, gasping for breath; "let me go, I say, and, upon the word of an honest man, I promise to finish our quarrel to-morrow, or when you please!"

"No, no! No second-hand dishes for me. I like my meat when it is hot," returned the quarrier, seizing the

young smith by the throat with one hand, while with the other he held him down, trying at the same time to kneel upon his chest.

"Help! For God's sake, help!" reiterated the mother of Angèle, in a distracted voice, "or my daughter will be murdered!"

"Mercy, mercy! I ask for mercy," exclaimed Agricola, striving by the most desperate efforts to escape from his adversary. "Let me go, I say!"

"I can't," replied the quarryman. "I have too much pleasure in breaking your bones!"

Rendered furious by his dread of the peril Angèle might be in, Agricola redoubled his efforts; when, just as his strength was failing him, an unexpected turn was given to the combat. The quarryman felt himself seized by a sharp set of teeth on the fleshy part of his leg, while three or four powerful blows, dealt by a vigorous arm, were applied to his head. At once dismayed, and suffering too much pain to retain his hold of Agricola, the savage quarrier was compelled to let him go; while he endeavoured to defend himself from the blows, which, however, ceased directly he set Agricola free.

"Thanks, dear father!" cried the young smith, rising up; "you have saved my life. Heaven grant it may not be too late to save that of Angèle!"

"Run, run, my boy! Never mind me!" exclaimed Dagobert; and, without waiting for a second bidding, Agricola rushed on towards the Maison Commune.

Accompanied by Killjoy, Dagobert, as has been already mentioned, had attended the daughters of Marshal Simon to visit their grandfather. Arriving in the midst of the tumult, the soldier had rallied a party of the terrified workmen, and set them to defend the entrance of the chamber into which the father of the marshal had been carried; and it was from this post that the old veteran had observed the imminent danger of his son.

A rush of combatants soon separated Dagobert from

the savage quarrier, who lay extended on the ground without speech or consciousness.

Agricola, flying on the wings of impatience, soon reached the staircase belonging to the Maison Commune, and, wrought up to more than his usual energy by the danger of her he loved, soon cleared his way through the opposing crowd, who in vain disputed his passage, and rushed towards the corridor, on which opened the chamber of Angèle. At the moment when he arrived there, the poor girl was mechanically defending her face with her two hands against Ciboule, who had fallen upon her like a hyena on her prey, and was endeavouring to scratch and tear her cheeks.

Agricola, with the speed of thought, rushed at the horrible hag, seized her by her yellow and matted locks with irresistible strength, and, flinging her from him, stretched her on her back with a violent and effective jerk.

Ciboule, though so rudely attacked, still exasperated with rage, rose instantly. At this moment several workmen, who had followed Agricola, were gaining the advantage in the contest, and whilst the smith lifted Angèle half fainting in his arms, and conveyed her to another chamber, Ciboule and her gang were forcibly driven away from this part of the house.

After the first rally, the very small number of real Loups, who, as Agricola said, were steady workmen who had had the weakness to allow themselves to be ensnared into this enterprise under a pretext of a companionship quarrel, seeing the excess which the ruffians, who had accompanied them against their wills, had committed, — these brave Loups, we must state, suddenly took part with the Dévorans.

"It is no longer a question of Loups and Dévorans," said one of the most determined Loups to Olivier, with whom he had been boldly and freely fighting. "Here are none but honest workmen, who ought to unite to get

rid of a gang of robbers, who have only come to rifle and rob."

"Yes," added another, "it was against our wishes that they began to break the windows of your house."

"It was the quarrier who begun all the riot," said another. "The real Loups repudiate it altogether. He will suffer for this."

"We may bully and squabble a bit with each other, but we do not esteem one another the less."[1]

This defection of a portion of the assailants, unhappily but a very small portion, still gave fresh courage to the workmen of the factory, and all Loups and Dévorans, although greatly inferior in numbers, united against the scamps of the Barriers and the other vagabonds who were advancing to such deplorable lengths.

One band of these wretches, excited and stimulated by the little weasel-faced man, the secret emissary of Baron Tripeaud, went in a body to the workshops of M. Hardy. Then there commenced a lamentable devastation, for these ruffians, full of rage and destruction, broke remorselessly machinery of the most costly description, and tools of the most delicate construction; goods half completed were pitilessly destroyed, and a savage emulation exciting these villains, the workshops, so lately models of economical arrangement and orderly toil, now presented but broken fragments. The yards were blocked up with goods of all descriptions, which were flung out of the windows with fierce shouts or

[1] We beg it may be understood by the reader that it is only the necessity of our story which has assigned to the Loups the character of aggressors. Whilst we are endeavouring to illustrate one of the abuses of companionship, which, by the way, are daily diminishing, we would not willingly assign a character of savage hostility to one party more than the other — to the Loups more than to the Dévorans. The Loups, who are stone-masons, are usually very hard-working, intelligent workmen, whose position is the more deserving of interest inasmuch as their labours of almost mathematical precision are severe and toilsome, and as their business sometimes stands still during three or four months of the year, it being one of those which the winter inevitably precludes. A great many Loups, in order to learn their trade thoroughly, follow every evening a course of lectures on linear geometry, applied to the cutting of stones, analogous to those taught by M. Agricola Perdiguier for carpenters. Several stone-masons exhibited an architectural model in plaster at the last exposition.

bursts of atrocious laughter. Then, too, thanks to the suggestions of the little weasel-faced man, M. Hardy's books of business, those commercial archives so indispensable to the merchant, were flung to the winds, torn, trampled under foot by a sort of infernal ring, composed of all that was most foul and infamous in this assemblage, — men and women, dirty, ragged, and destructive, who had taken each other by the hand and were circling around whilst uttering horrid shrieks and clamour.

Strange and painful contrast! Within hearing of these horrible scenes of tumult and devastation a scene of painful and imposing calmness was going on in the chamber of Marshal Simon's father, where several devoted men were watching.

The old workman was stretched on a bed, his head wrapped in a bandage, under which were seen his gray and bloody locks; his features were livid, his respiration oppressed, and his eyes fixed, but without any sight in them. Marshal Simon, standing up at the head of the bed, bending over his parent, was gazing with anxiety and despair for the smallest sign of sense in the dying man, whose sinking pulse a doctor was feeling. Rose and Blanche, brought by Dagobert, were kneeling at the bed with their hands clasped, their eyes bathed in tears. A little farther off, and half hidden in the shadow of the chamber, for the hours had flown and night had come on, was Dagobert, with his arms folded over his breast and his features working convulsively.

There reigned a profound and solemn silence in the apartment, broken from time to time by the stifled sobs of Rose and Blanche, or by the painful breathings of old M. Simon.

The eyes of the marshal were dry, gloomy, and burning; he never moved them from off his father's face, unless to interrogate the doctor by his look.

There are singular fatalities. This doctor was M. Baleinier. The *Maison de Santé* of the doctor was very

close to the nearest barrier of the factory, and being famous in the environs, they had run to his house first to seek medical assistance.

Suddenly Doctor Baleinier made a movement. Marshal Simon, who had not taken his eyes off him, exclaimed:

"Hope!"

"At least, M. le Duc, the pulse is somewhat stronger."

"He is saved!" cried the marshal.

"Don't give way to false hopes, M. le Duc," replied the doctor, gravely; "the pulse is recovering, but it is the result of the powerful stimuli which I have applied to his feet; but I cannot pronounce as to what may be the issue of this crisis."

"My father, my father, do you hear me?" exclaimed the marshal, when he saw the old man make a slight movement of the head and his eyelids work gently.

In effect he soon opened his eyes, and intelligence beamed in them once more.

"Father, you live! Do you recognise me?" exclaimed the marshal, overcome by joy and hope.

"Pierre, are you there?" said the old man, in a feeble tone. "Your hand, — give —" And he moved a little.

"There, dear father!" cried the marshal, pressing the old man's hand in his own.

Then yielding to a burst of irrepressible joy, he threw his arms around his parent and covered his hands, face, and gray hair with kisses, exclaiming:

"Thanks, thanks, my God! He is spared! He lives, he lives!"

At this instant the noise and tumult, occasioned by the renewal of the combat between the Loups and Dévorans, reached even the ears of the dying man.

"That noise, that noise!" cried he. "What means it, and those wild shouts? Are our people fighting?"

"It is all over now, I believe," said the marshal, hoping to tranquillise his parent.

"Pierre," said the old man, in a feeble and broken tone, "I have not — long to —"

"Dearest father!"

"My son, my beloved son! Let me speak to you — while — I am yet able, — let me tell you —"

"Sir," said Baleinier, earnestly, to the old workman, "Heaven may yet work a miracle in your favour. Seek to invoke its aid through the mediation of a priest. Let us send for some holy man!"

"I thank you, sir," replied the old artisan; "but I need no priest. I have lived a long and an honest life, and fear not to resign my spirit unto him who gave it. But my last sighs shall be breathed in the arms of my worthy and excellent son!"

"Talk not of dying, my father, I implore you," cried the marshal. "It cannot — must not be!"

"Pierre," said the old man, in a tone which, though firm at first, became gradually weaker and weaker, "you asked me a short time since my advice — touching an affair of deep importance, — and it almost seems as though the desire — to point out to you — what your duty to yourself and others requires of you — has recalled me for a time to life, — for I could not die in peace — if I knew you were about to commit any action unworthy — of you or your family. Listen, then, — my son, — my brave, my beloved son. At this solemn moment — a parent cannot give wrong counsel; — you have a weighty and most serious duty to perform, — therefore, as you would act as becomes a man of honour, — and avoid disobedience to my dying commands, — you must — unhesitatingly —"

The old man's voice became more and more feeble, and by the time he had uttered the last words it was entirely unintelligible. The only words which, by bending closely over his father, the marshal could distinguish were, "Napoleon II. — oath — dishonour — my son." After which the lips of the old workman continued for

some time to move mechanically, and then — all was over.

At the moment when M. Simon expired, the stillness of the night was disturbed by loud and frenzied cries of "Fire, fire!" and flames burst out from a portion of the workrooms filled with inflammable materials, and into which the little weasel-faced man had been seen to glide; while from afar might be heard the beating of drums, announcing the approach of a detachment of troops sent for from the Barrier.

Spite of every effort to subdue the fire, the flames had now for more than an hour preyed upon the manufactory, and in the clear frostiness of the starlight night it blazed and crackled as the strong northerly wind increased its fury. An individual was at this moment making his way across the fields, but prevented by an elevation of the ground before him from seeing the fire. This person was M. Hardy, who had chosen to walk home across the fields, in the hopes of finding relief from the fever which preyed upon him,— a fever deadly as the anguish shiver of a dying man.

He had been told but too true a tale. The adored mistress, the noble-minded woman, whose affection would have consoled him for the fearful deception practised on him, had quitted France! Alas! there was no reason to doubt it. Marguerite had departed for America; and, in obedience to her mother's commands, had not even written one line to reconcile him to her loss. Her mother had exacted from her that she should thus bitterly expiate her forgetfulness of her marriage vows, and Marguerite had obeyed the stern decree. Often had she said to her lover, "I could never hesitate between my mother's wishes and your affection." Too faithfully had she followed this doctrine of maternal obedience; she was gone, and no hope — no, not the faintest glimmer — remained. The ocean rolled its waters between himself and the object of

his love, whom he knew to be too blindly obedient and submissive to her mother to leave a hope of ever again beholding her. No, all was ended between them, and each was to the other as though such a being had never existed; so that he could no more promise himself the soft sympathy of Marguerite's love to console him for the shock his heart had received in the treachery of his dearest friend. Thus, then, were the two most cherished objects of his soul torn away, plucked rudely forth from the heart in which they were enshrined, broken, destroyed for ever, and that at the same time — almost by the same blow.

What, then, is left the poor sensitive being a doting mother called her mimosa? Where shall he seek consolation for his lost love, or whither turn for healing balm to cure those wounds perfidy and treachery had dealt by the hands of him he esteemed as a second brother? Bethink thee, thou heartstricken mourner, of that blessed spot thou createdst after thine own image, of that happy, flourishing colony where, thanks to thee, labour reaps its reward and full enjoyments; think of the worthy fellows who hourly bless thy name, who hast rendered them prosperous and respectable as men, and whose well-merited gratitude will ever be yours. With them you will find a true and noble affection and gratitude; return, then, to the worthy artisans, who will hail thy coming with unmixed and unfeigned joy, and there be thine asylum, thy shelter, amid all the wreck of thy hopes and dreams of trust and affection.

The peaceful calm of this smiling retreat, the sight of the matchless happiness enjoyed there by the beings thou hast so largely benefited, will heal thy lacerated wounds and pour comfort into thy bleeding heart.

Yet a little farther, and thou mayest behold from the summit of yonder hill, afar off in the plain, that paradise of labour and for such as labour, erected by thee, and where thou art deservedly worshipped and blessed as a god.

M. Hardy ascended the small elevation which had hitherto concealed the factory from his view.

At this moment the flames, which had been for a time repressed, broke out with additional fury from the windows of the Maison Commune, whither the conflagration had now extended.

A bright light, first white, and then glowing red and deep copper colour, illumined the horizon for miles around.

M. Hardy gazed with a species of bewildered stupefaction at the appalling sight.

All at once an immense body of flames rushed up amid a whirlwind of smoke, accompanied by a shower of glittering sparks and pieces of fire, lighting up the country for a considerable distance, and bringing its glowing reflection to the very spot where M. Hardy stood. The violence of the northerly wind, alternately driving and repressing the flames which curled and wreathed beneath its influence, quickly brought to the ears of its wretched owner the hurried sounds of the alarm-bell belonging to the blazing factory.

Part IX.

THE BLACK PANTHER OF JAVA

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE NEGOTIATOR.

A FEW days have elapsed since the burning down of M. Hardy's factory. The following scene takes place in the Rue Clovis, in the house where Rodin had a lodging, which he had now quitted, the house also inhabited by Rose-Pompon, who, without the slightest scruple, availed herself of the ménage of her friend Philemon.

It was about noon; Rose-Pompon was alone in the student's chamber, breakfasting very gaily at the corner of her fire. But what a singular breakfast! What a peculiar fire! What an odd chamber!

Let the reader imagine a tolerably large apartment, lighted up by two windows without curtains; for as the look-out was an open space, the occupier of the room had no fear of curious eyes. One side of the room served for dressing in, and there hung, on a large cloak-pin, the gallant *débardeur's* costume, appertaining unto Rose-Pompon; not far from the waterman's vest, belonging unto the Philemon aforesaid, with his wide trousers of coarse gray cloth, as entirely smeared all over with tar, thousand portholes, thousand sharks, thousand whales, as if this intrepid navigator had occupied the maintop of a frigate during a voyage around the world. A gown of Rose-Pompon's hung gracefully over the legs of a pair of pantaloons with feet to them, which seemed as if coming out of the bottom of the skirt. Placed on the lower shelf of a small bookcase, very dusty and neglected, there was, beside three old boots (why three boots?) and a

considerable amount of empty bottles, a death's head, a souvenir of astrology and friendship, left to Philemon by a friend and fellow student in medicine. With a pleasantry very common in the *Pays Latin* (the quarter in which the medical students in Paris "most do congregate"), this head held between its teeth, which were splendidly white, a clay tobacco-pipe, with a blackened bowl; besides this, the shining skull was half concealed beneath an old rakish-looking hat, put on knowingly on one side, and covered with faded flowers and ribands. When Philemon was drunk, he used very gravely to contemplate this ossuary, and gave vent to sundry monologues of dithyrambic vein, relative to the philosophical connection between death and the foolish joys of this life.

Two or three plaster masks, with their repulsive noses and chins, more or less dilapidated, were nailed to the wall, testifying the temporary bent Philemon had had for the science of phrenology, that patient and reflective study, whence he had drawn the undeniable conclusion that, having, to an extraordinary degree, the bump of debt, it was necessary that he should resign himself to the fatality of his organisation, which imposed on him a creditor as a vital necessity.

On the mantelpiece stood intact, and in all its majesty, the monster glass of the aquatic, in full costume, having on the one side a china teapot, which had lost its spout, and flanked on the other by an inkstand of black wood, whose orifice was half concealed beneath a green and mossy bed of vegetation.

From time to time the silence of this retreat was interrupted by the cooing of the pigeons, to whom Rose-Pompon had given a cordial hospitality in Philemon's study. Chilly as a quail, Rose-Pompon kept close to the fireside, and seemed to rejoice greatly in the soothing influence of the sunbeams which shone brightly upon her.

The whimsical little creature had on a very odd cos-

tume, but one which singularly brought out her fresh youth of seventeen, her piquant features, and her attractive manner, whilst her beautiful light hair was (as usual) carefully combed and arranged.

Rose-Pompon had, with great ingenuity, put on over her own chemise the large scarlet woollen shirt of Philemon, a part and parcel of his rowing costume. The collar, open and falling down, showed the whiteness of the young girl's own garment, whilst her own neck and dimpled shoulder were so fair that the scarlet shirt seemed reflected in them with a rosy tint. Her fresh and well-turned arms came from beneath the large, tucked-up sleeves, and her well-formed legs, crossed over each other, were clad in a tight, white silk stocking, met at the ankle by a small slipper. A black silk handkerchief fastened the scarlet shirt around the wasp-like waist of Rose-Pompon, and gave to the attire a grace worthy of a modern Phidias, and perfectly original.

We have said that the fire by which Rose-Pompon sat was singular; our reader may judge. The extravagant jade, the prodigal puss, finding herself short of wood, was economically warming herself with Philemon's boot-trees, which, it must be confessed, offered to the eye a combustible which burnt with admirable regularity.

We have also said that Rose-Pompon's breakfast was singular; let the reader judge. On a small table placed before her was the basin into which she had recently dipped her fresh and pretty face, in water no less fresh; from the bottom of this basin, now metamorphosed into a salad bowl, Rose-Pompon took, it must be confessed, with the tips of her finger, some large leaves of salad, as green as grass, and seasoned with vinegar, enough to choke most persons; then she crunched these verdant vegetables with all the power of her small white teeth, whose enamel was proof against all such dangers, whilst, as a beverage, she had mixed a glass of water in syrup of currants, and stirred up the mixture with a small

wooden mustard-spoon. As a wind-up, there were a dozen olives in one of those little blue and opaque glass trays, that fetch about thirteen pence halfpenny; and her dessert consisted of nuts, which were being half roasted on a shovel nearly red-hot from the flames of Philemon's boot-trees.

That Rose-Pompon, with food of such incredible and wild taste, was worthy of her name, from the brilliancy of her complexion, is one of those divine miracles which reveal the omnipotence of youth and health.

Rose-Pompon, after having crunched her salad, was about to munch her olives, when a gentle tap was heard on the door, which was discreetly bolted withinside.

"Who's there?" said Rose-Pompon.

"A friend — an old acquaintance," replied a sonorous and mirthful voice; "why have you fastened your door?"

"What! Is it you, Nini-Moulin?"

"Yes, my beloved ward. Open instantly, — my business is urgent."

"Open to you — really now — what, as I am? That would be nice!"

"I should say so! As you are now would be nice — very nice, indeed! Ah, rosiest of all the roses that the little god Cupid ever nestled amongst!"

"Go — go, and preach Lent and morality in your newspaper, fat apostle!" said Rose-Pompon, returning the scarlet shirt to the rest of Philemon's costume.

"Ah, now, are we really going to have a long talk in this way through the keyhole, for the extreme edification of all the neighbours?" said Nini-Moulin. "You must reflect that I have very important things to tell you, — things that will astonish your weak nerves."

"Well, then, give me time just to slip on my gown, you old plague!"

"Oh, if you are afraid of shocking my modesty, I beg you will not overrate my delicacy. I am not at all squeamish, and am quite willing to take you as you are."

"Here's a pretty darling for the sanctified elect!" said Rose-Pompon, opening the door with one hand, whilst, with the other, she finished fastening her dress about her nymph-like shape.

"Well, here you are back again in your dove-cote, pretty bird of passage!" said Nini-Moulin, crossing his arms and looking at Rose-Pompon with a serio-comic air. "And whence have you arrived, I should like to know? For three whole days you have not perched here, naughty little dove!"

"Quite correct, Nini; I only returned last night. So, then, you called during my absence?"

"Every day, and sometimes twice a day, mademoiselle, for I have very serious things to talk to you about."

"Serious things! Oh, then, what a laugh we shall have!"

"Quite the contrary, it is a very serious affair," said Nini-Moulin, seating himself. "But, in the first place, what have you been doing during the three days that you have deserted this domicile, so conjugal and Philemonic? I must know that before I say another word."

"Will you have some olives?" said Rose-Pompon, as she masticated one of the oleaginous berries.

"Oh, that's your answer; I take. Unhappy Philemon!"

"There's no unhappy Philemon in the case, slanderer. Clara has had a death in her house, and during the first few days after the burial she was afraid of sleeping alone all night."

"I thought Clara was quite well provided against all such alarms."

"Then, great viper, you are mistaken, for I went to the poor girl's to keep her company."

At this declaration the religious writer hummed between his teeth, with an air perfectly incredulous and derisive.

"What! You mean to insinuate that I have been playing Philemon some tricks?" exclaimed Rose-Pom-

pon, cracking a nut with all the indignation of virtue unjustly suspected.

"I did not say tricks, but one little trick, small, and *couleur de Rose-Pompon.*"

"I repeat to you that it was not for my pleasure that I went away from here; on the contrary, for, during the time, poor, dear Céphyse has gone away."

"Yes, the Queen-Bacchanal has gone on her travels; Mother Arsène told me that. But when I talk to you of Philemon, you answer me with Céphyse, and that is not a clear way of reply."

"May I be eaten up by the black panther which they show at the Porte St. Martin, if I do not speak true. And, apropos of that, you must have two stalls, and take me to see these animals, my dear Nini-Moulin; they tell me these savage brutes are such loves."

"Why, are you mad?"

"Mad?"

"True, I may guide your youth as a rollicking grandpa, in the midst of tulips, more or less storm-blown; true, but I do not risk finding any of my pious paymasters there; but to take you to a Lent spectacle, for there are nothing but the beasts to be seen, why, I should meet nothing but the 'elect,' and very nice I should look with you under my arm!"

"Put on a false nose, and straps under your trousers, my stout darling, and no one would know thee."

"I am not talking about false noses, but of what I have to tell you, since you assure me you have no new love-affair on hand."

"I swear it," said Rose-Pompon, solemnly, extending her left hand horizontally, whilst with the right she conveyed a nut between her teeth, and then she added, with a surprised air, as she contemplated the crammed pockets of Nini-Moulin's *paletot-sac:*

"Ah, what great pockets you have got! What can you have stuffed in them?"

"Matters which concern you, Rose-Pompon," replied Dumoulin, in a serious tone.

"Me?"

"Rose-Pompon," said Nini-Moulin, with a majestic air, "would you like a carriage? Can you prefer a splendid suite of rooms to this frightful dog-hole? Would you like to be a duchess?"

"Nonsense — more fun! Come, will you take some olives? If not, I shall finish them all — there's only one left."

Without replying to this gastronomic offer, Nini-Moulin rummaged in one of his pockets, whence he extracted a case containing a very pretty bracelet, which he dangled before the eyes of the young girl.

"Oh, what a love of a bracelet!" she said, clasping her two small hands together. "A green snake biting his tail — emblem of my love for Philemon."

"Don't mention Philemon's name, it annoys me," said Nini-Moulin, clasping the bracelet around Rose-Pompon's wrist, who made no opposition, but laughed like a mad thing, and said:

"It is a purchase you have had to make for some one, stout apostle, and you want to try the effect. Well, really, it is a very charming trinket."

"Rose-Pompon," replied Nini-Moulin, "will you or will you not have servants, an opera-box, and a thousand francs a month for the expenses of your toilet?"

"Still carrying on the joke? Go on, go on," said the young girl, making the bracelet sparkle whilst she ate the nuts. "But why do you keep on at the same jest; why don't you find some others?"

Nini-Moulin's hand again dived into his pocket, and this time he drew out a magnificent chain and chatelaine, which he put around Rose-Pompon's neck.

"Oh, what a duck of a chain!" exclaimed the young girl, looking alternately at the sparkling gem and the religious writer. "If you also selected this, you have

really excellent taste; but ain't I a good girl to allow myself to be made into a show window for your trinkets?"

"Rose-Pompon," said Nini-Moulin, even more majestically than before, "these trifles are nothing compared with what you may aspire to if you listen to the counsels of your old friend."

Rose-Pompon began to look at Dumoulin with surprise, and said to him, "What does this mean, Nini-Moulin? Explain, I beg of you. What counsels do you mean?"

Dumoulin made no reply, but again dipping his hand into his unwearied pockets, he this time drew forth a parcel which he carefully untied. It was a splendid mantilla of black lace.

Rose-Pompon arose full of fresh admiration, and Dumoulin adroitly threw the rich mantilla over the shoulders of the young girl.

"What a superb one! I never saw its fellow! What a lovely pattern, and how splendidly embroidered!" said Rose-Pompon, examining it with close scrutiny, and, it must be added, with utter disinterestedness; then she added, "Why, have you got a whole shop in your pocket? Where did you get so many fine things?" Then bursting into a fit of laughter, which suffused her lovely face, she added, "I know — I know, it is the wedding paraphernalia of Madame Sainte-Colombe. Accept my congratulations!"

"And where should I fish for the wherewithal to buy all these wonderful affairs?" asked Nini-Moulin. "All this, I repeat, is yours, if you will have them, and listen to me!"

"What!" said Rose-Pompon, with amaze, "are you really serious?"

"Perfectly serious."

"Your proposal to live as a great lady?"

"These jewels are the guarantee of the reality of these offers."

"And is it you, my poor dear Nini-Moulin, who propose this to me on behalf of another?"

"One minute, if you please," said the religious writer, with an air of comic solemnity; "you ought to know me too well, oh, most cherished of wards, not to feel quite sure I should be the last person to persuade you to any improper proceeding. No, I have too much self-respect for that; even if I could forget that my so doing would be an insult to Philemon, who has confided to me the charge of your virtue and morality!"

"Come, Nini-Moulin," said Rose-Pompon, more and more bewildered, "leave off talking all this nonsense, for, upon my word and honour, I don't understand a word you are saying."

"Yet nothing can be more simple — I —"

"Oh, now I see!" exclaimed Rose-Pompon, interrupting Nini-Moulin. "Somebody has fallen in love with me, and sends you to offer me his hand and heart, with a few pretty little etceteras, just to coax me to accept them. Why could not you have said so at once?"

"Somebody wanting to marry you," cried Dumoulin, shrugging up his shoulders; "I should rather think not!"

"Nothing about being married!" cried Rose-Pompon, falling back into her original surprise.

"Nothing whatever, my little dear."

"But the proposals you have to make are strictly correct, are they not, my fat apostle?"

"Pure as your own eyes, or diamonds of the first water." And here Dumoulin spoke the truth.

"You will not ask me to betray poor dear Philemon?"

"Not in the most trifling degree."

"Or bind me to be faithful to any one else?"

"Certainly not."

For a few moments Rose-Pompon remained utterly speechless from utter confusion of ideas; then, impatient

at all this bewilderment, she exclaimed, "Come now, do leave off all this nonsense. I am not quite such a simpleton as to imagine that anybody would think it worth while to set me up for a duchess for nothing, for what should there be in my appearance to induce any person to take so much trouble about me?" said the sly girl, with a well-assumed expression of modest humility.

"What should they see? Why, everything the heart could desire."

"But still," said Rose-Pompon, more amd more perplexed, "what am I required to give in return for all this?"

"Nothing at all!"

"Nothing?"

"Not so much even as this," said Nini-Moulin, biting the end of his nail.

"Well, then, if I am to give nothing, what shall I have to do?"

"Nothing in the world, but to look as pretty as possible, amuse yourself, and ride about in a carriage. So, you see, your duties will not be very fatiguing; added to which, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are assisting in a good action."

"By living like a duchess?"

"Yes; therefore pray do not ask me any further questions,—for, indeed, I could not answer them if I would; besides, you will not be obliged to remain against your will. Just try the life I propose to you; if it suits you, continue it, if not, you will be at liberty to return to your Philemonic establishment whenever you please."

"That is fair enough!"

"Well, then, I say, try it. What do you risk by so doing?"

"Nothing, certainly; but I cannot persuade myself you are in earnest; besides," added she, hesitatingly, "I scarcely know whether I ought."

Nini-Moulin went to the window, opened it, and said

to Rose-Pompon, who ran to see what he was looking at, "What is that before the door of the house?"

"A nice, pretty little carriage, upon my word. Oh, dear, oh, dear, how I should like to have just an hour's ride in it!"

"Well, then, you may have your wish as soon as you like, for that carriage is yours, and is there to await your orders."

"Waiting for me?" said Rose-Pompon; "why, must I make up my mind this very minute?"

"Or refuse altogether."

"Must I positively give an answer to-day?"

"This very minute."

"But where are you going to take me?"

"How should I know?"

"Not know where you yourself are to conduct me? Nonsense!"

"Indeed I do not (and again Dumoulin spoke the truth); the coachman has his orders."

"Now do you know all this is excessively droll, Nini-Moulin?"

"I hope so. If it were not, where would be the pleasure?"

"You are right."

"So, then, you mean to accept my offer, — that's well, I am delighted at it, both for your sake and my own."

"How for yours?"

"Because by accepting what I propose, you will render me a great service."

"Render you a service? How? In what manner? what sort of a service?"

"Never mind how, provided you do serve and oblige me."

"Certainly; then I don't care about knowing how."

"Now then — shall we go?"

"After all, why need I be afraid? They can't eat me

or drink me," said Rose-Pompon, resolutely, as she skipped to a closet, and took from thence a pretty little pink cap, which she arranged before a cracked mirror, placing it so as to display her snow-white neck, with the silky roots of her glossy hair; thus giving to her youthful features a look of archness almost amounting to pleasure-seeking joy. "And now for my cloak," said she to Nini-Moulin, who appeared wonderfully relieved since she had made up her mind to accept his proposition.

"A cloak, indeed!" returned the cicisbeo, feeling for the last time in his last pocket, — a regular wallet, — from which he drew a magnificent cashmere shawl, which he placed on the shoulders of Rose-Pompon.

"Good gracious me!" exclaimed the astonished girl, out of breath with so joyful a surprise. "What a love of a shawl, — a real, downright cashmere, I declare!" Then with an expression of countenance indicative of the heroic determination of her mind, she added, "I have decided; yes, I will run whatever risks are before me!" So saying, she lightly descended the stairs, followed by Nini-Moulin. The worthy dealer in fruit and charcoal was, as usual, in her shop.

"Good morning, mademoiselle," said she to the young girl; "you are up betimes this morning."

"Yes, so I am, Mother Arsène. Here is my key!"

"Thank you, mademoiselle."

"Oh, my goodness!" said Rose-Pompon, turning quickly around to Nini-Moulin, and speaking in a low voice, drawing him, at the same time, to a distance from the portress; "but now I think of it! — Suppose Philemon — "

"Suppose what?"

"That he should return!"

"Oh, the d—l!" said Nini-Moulin, scratching his ear.

"Yes, what will Philemon say, I should like to know,

if he arrives before I come back? Am I wanted for long?"

"You will be absent three or four months, I believe."

"Not more?"

"I think not."

"Oh, very well then," said Rose-Pompon; then returning to the fruit-woman, she said, after a minute's reflection, "Mother Arsène, if Philemon should arrive, tell him — I am gone out — upon business."

"I will, mademoiselle."

"And tell him to wait till I come back, and not to be fidgety."

"I'll be sure to say so, mademoiselle."

"And desire him on no account to forget to feed my pigeons that are in his room."

"I'll not fail to give your message, mademoiselle."

"Good-bye, Mother Arsène."

"Good-bye, mademoiselle."

And with these parting words, Rose-Pompon triumphantly ascended the carriage in company with Nini-Moulin.

"D—l take me," said Jacques Dumoulin, "if I can guess what is to be the upshot of all this! However," added he, as the carriage drove rapidly from the Rue Clovis, "I have made up for my late blunder, and now I care nothing for the rest of the affair."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SECRET.

The following scene occurred a few days after the carrying off of Rose-Pompon by Nini-Moulin.

Mlle. de Cardoville was seated, and in a deep reverie, in her private room, hung with green damask, and having an ebony bookcase, relieved by tall caryatides of gilt metal.

By certain significant signs it was evident that Mlle. de Cardoville had sought, in the fine arts, for distraction from sorrowful and serious reflections. Near an open piano was a harp placed close to a music-stand. On a table, covered with boxes of crayons and sketches, were several sheets of drawing-paper covered with highly coloured sketches. The greater number were of Asiatic scenery, warmed with all the glow of an Eastern sun.

Faithful to her fancy for dressing herself when at home in a picturesque manner, Mlle. de Cardoville resembled, on this occasion, one of those haughty portraits of Velasquez, with their noble and aristocratic look. Her gown was of black watered silk, very full in the skirt, and very long in the waist, with slashed sleeves, puffed out with pink satin, embroidered with jet tags. A Spanish frill, very much starched, reached almost to her chin, and was confined around her neck by a red riband. This collar sloped gradually over the pink satin corsage laced with jet beads, and terminated in a point at the waist.

It is impossible to describe how perfectly this black

dress, with its ample and bright folds, relieved by the pink and shining jet, harmonised with the dazzling whiteness of Adrienne's skin and the golden hues of her beautiful hair, which fell in long and silky ringlets down to her waist.

The young girl was half sitting, half reclining on a causeuse, covered with green damask, the back of which was high towards the chimney, and gradually sloped down to the feet. A kind of light trellis of gilt metal, semicircular, about five feet high, was covered over with splendid passion-flowers, which were planted in a deep flower-box of ebony, whence the trellis proceeded, and thus covered the couch with a sort of screen of foliage and large flowers, green without and purple within, and looking as highly enamelled as those flowers which we see on the Saxony porcelain. A sweet and delicate perfume, like violets and jasmine mingling, was emitted from the corollæ of these splendid *passiflores quadrangulosa.*

It was strange to see the large quantity of new books (Adrienne had bought them two or three days before), only recently cut open, which were scattered about her, some on the causeuse, others on a small stand; and, amongst others, were large atlases, with engravings, lying on the splendid marten-skin carpet which was spread at the foot of the sofa. Still more strange, these books, of different size and by different authors, all treated of the same subject.

Adrienne's posture revealed a sort of melancholy depression. Her cheeks were pale, whilst a light and bluish ring around her half-closed black eyes gave them an expression of the deepest sadness.

Many motives conspired to cause this dejection, and, amongst others, was that of the disappearance of La Mayeux. Without entirely believing the perfidious insinuations of Rodin, who implied that, in her fear of being unmasked by him, she had not dared to remain in the

house, Adrienne still experienced a cruel and heartfelt pain when she reflected that this young girl in whom she had had such faith had fled from her almost sisterly hospitality without leaving her one word of grateful adieu; for they had taken care not to show to her benefactress the few lines which the poor sempstress had hastily written before she departed, and had only mentioned the note for five hundred francs found in her bureau; and this fact, which was so inexplicable, had also contributed to excite most painful suspicions in the mind of Mlle. de Cardoville. She already experienced the sad effects of that mistrust of all and everything which Rodin had counselled, that distrust and reserve becoming the more powerful as, for the first time in her life, Mlle. de Cardoville, until then a stranger to falsehood, had a secret to conceal, — a secret which was at once her happiness, her shame, and her torment.

Half reclining on her divan, thoughtful and melancholy, Adrienne, frequently lost in reverie, turned over one of her newly purchased volumes, when suddenly she gave a slight shriek of surprise, the hand which held the book trembled like a leaf, and she began to read with passionate attention and with the most eager curiosity. Soon her eyes kindled with enthusiasm, her smile became ineffably sweet, and she seemed at once proud, happy, and delighted; but at the moment when she had turned over another page her features expressed disappointment and vexation.

Then, again she recurred to that part which had caused her such delicious emotion; but this time she perused it with careful slowness, spelling, as it were, each page, and each line, and each word; then, from time to time, she paused, and then, pensively, with her brow bent and leaning on her lovely hand, she seemed to ponder in deepest reflection over the passages which she had just read with such tender and enthusiastic love. Arriving soon at a passage which so deeply im-

pressed her that a tear started in her eyes, she turned the volume suddenly to ascertain its author's name. For some seconds she contemplated this name with an expression of singular gratitude, and at length pressed it to her vermilion lips. After having again and again read and reread the lines which had so affected her, then, no doubt forgetting the letter in the thought, she fell into a fit of musing so deep that the volume slipped from her hand and fell on the floor.

During this reverie the look of the young lady mechanically rested on a beautiful bas-relief, supported on an ebony easel, and placed near one of the windows.

The splendid bronze, recently cast from a plaster mould of the antique, represented the triumph of the Indian Bacchus, and never had the Grecian art attained higher perfection. The youthful conqueror, half clothed in a lion's skin, which did not conceal the juvenile purity and beauty of his limbs, bore the stamp of divinity, standing erect on a car drawn by two tigers, with an air at once mild and commanding. He leaned with one hand on a thyrsus, and with the other guided his savage team with tranquil majesty. By the rare mixture of grace, strength, and calmness, it was easy to recognise the hero who had so boldly contended with his fellow men and the monsters of the forest.

The yellow tone of the light which was cast on this sculpture on one side brought out the figure of the youthful deity admirably; and as the relief was very high, thus lighted, it stood out like a splendid statue of pale gold from the dark and shaded bronze ground.

When Adrienne had first glanced at this rare combination of divine perfection, her features were calm and pensive, but her contemplation, at first almost mechanical, becoming more and more attentive and reflecting, the young girl rose suddenly from her seat, and approaching slowly towards the bas-relief, appeared to be gradually impressed with the singular resemblance.

Then a light tint began to suffuse the cheeks of Mlle. de Cardoville, which gradually spread over her cheeks, brow, and neck. She approached nearer to the bas-relief, and after having cast around her a furtive glance, as though ashamed and fearing to be surprised in a guilty action, she twice raised her hand, trembling with emotion, in order to touch, with the tips of her rosy fingers, the forehead of the Indian Bacchus.

But twice, with a sort of modest hesitation, she paused. At last the temptation became too strong, and giving way to the impulse, she, with her alabaster finger, after having delicately caressed the pale, gold countenance of the young god, pressed somewhat more tardily, for a second, his noble and pure forehead.

At this pressure, light as it was, Adrienne seemed to undergo an electric shock, and trembled violently; her eyes half closed, and after having swam for an instant in their humid brilliancy, she raised them towards heaven and closed them for an instant, as if they were weighed down by feeling; then her head fell back, her knees bent insensibly, her vermilion lips half opened to allow her warm breath to escape, and her bosom throbbed as if all the force of youth and life accelerated its beatings and impelled her blood; and then the burning countenance of Adrienne betrayed, in spite of herself, a sort of joy at once timid and impassioned, chaste and sensitive, whose expression was unutterably touching.

It is, in truth, unutterably touching to see a young virgin whose chaste brow first blushes with secret love. Does not the Creator of all things love the body of his creatures as well as the soul, his divine spark? Ought he not to be religiously glorified in the mind, as well as in the senses, with which he has so paternally gifted his creatures? Then they are impious blasphemers who seek to stifle divine sensations, instead of guiding and harmonising them with their heavenly source.

Suddenly Mlle. de Cardoville shuddered, raised her

head, opened her eyes as if she were recovering from a dream, retreated quickly and left the bas-relief, and then made several turns in the apartment, greatly agitated, and holding her burning hands to her forehead.

Then falling, almost exhausted, on a seat, her tears flowed abundantly, bitter grief was depicted on her countenance, which thus revealed the fierce internal contest under which she was suffering.

Then her tears gradually dried, and to this crisis of agony succeeded a sort of violent anger, extreme indignation against herself, which might be guessed from the words that escaped her.

"For the first time in my life I feel that I am weak and cowardly, — oh, yes, cowardly, very cowardly!"

The noise of a door which opened and shut roused Mlle. de Cardoville from her painful reverie. Georgette entered, and said to her mistress:

"Will mademoiselle receive M. le Comte de Montbron?"

Adrienne, knowing good taste too well to betray to her women any annoyance at a visit ill-timed, said to Georgette:

"Did you say to M. de Montbron I was at home?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Then pray ask him to come in."

Although Mlle. de Cardoville felt at this moment exceedingly annoyed at the arrival of M. de Montbron, yet we should say that she felt for him an affection that was almost filial, a high esteem, and at the same time, by a contrast which is however very common, she almost invariably found her opinion entirely opposed to his; and the consequence was that, when Mlle. de Cardoville had her mind perfectly free, discussions extremely gay and animated took place, in which, in spite of his vein of mockery and scepticism, his lengthened experience and profound knowledge of men and things, and (let us

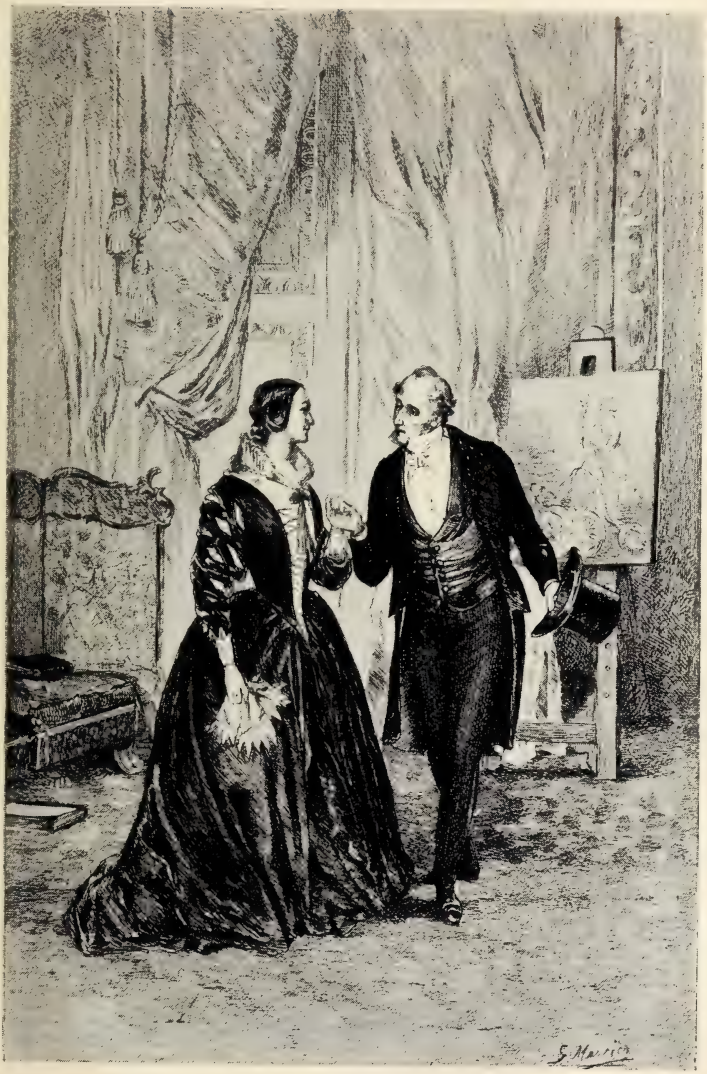
add) in spite of his *rouerie de bonne compagnie*, M. de Montbron had not always the best of the debate, and he acknowledged his defeat with the gayest good humour. Thus, that we may give some idea of the disagreements between the count and Adrienne, he had, before he became, as he said, her accomplice, always opposed (from other motives than those alleged by Madame de Saint-Dizier) her desire to live alone and as she chose, whilst, on the contrary, Rodin, assigning to the motives of the young girl on this point a certain degree of greatness, had acquired a certain influence over her.

The Comte de Montbron, then turned sixty years of age, had been one of the most brilliant men of the Directory, the Consulate, and the Empire; his extravagance, his *bons-mots*, his wit, his duels, his loves, his losses at play, had constantly occupied the society of the age in which he lived. As to his disposition, his heart, and his habits, we will add that he had continued always on terms of the closest friendship with all his old mistresses. At the time when we present him to the reader, he was still a high and a lucky player; he had, as they used to say, a very aristocratic look, a decided manner, yet clever and somewhat sarcastic; his habits were those of the best society, with a sort of impertinent raillery, when he did not like his company; he was very tall and thin, and still graceful in his figure, and moreover youthful; his forehead was high and bald; his hair white and short; his gray whiskers cut *en croissant;* his face was long; his nose aquiline; his blue eyes were very penetrating; and his teeth still in excellent preservation.

"M. le Comte de Montbron," said Georgette, opening the door.

The count entered and kissed Adrienne's hand with a kind of paternal familiarity.

"Now, then," said M. de Montbron to himself, "let us try and discover the truth I have come to learn, in order to prevent what may else perchance be a great calamity."



"THE COUNT ENTERED."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CONFESSION.

Unwilling to expose the violence of the feelings by which she was agitated, Mlle. de Cardoville received M. de Montbron with a forced appearance of excessive gaiety, while he, on his part, spite of his perfect self-possession, found himself somewhat at a loss how to commence the subject he was desirous of discussing with Adrienne, and therefore resolved (as it is commonly called) to feel his way before entering upon the serious conversation he intended to hold with her. After looking fixedly at his fair companion for some seconds, M. de Montbron shook his head, and said, with a half mournful sigh:

"My dear child, I do not feel perfectly happy."

"What is the matter with you, my dear count?" said Adrienne, smiling; "are you suffering from headache? or does fortune frown just now?"

"Mine is, indeed, a pain in the heart!"

"Nay, nay, count! I cannot think it possible that the most skilful player in France should suffer more from the coolness of some adverse beauty than he would experience were the dice unpropitious."

"Still, my dear child, I have a sore pain at my heart, and, stranger still, it is on your account."

"Upon my word, my lord," said Adrienne, laughing, "you will make me quite vain."

"Indeed, my child, I have no expectation that what I am about to say will in any way excite your vanity, for,

in truth, I have to reproach you with neglecting your beauty. Look only at your pale, dejected, and careworn features, the melancholy which has hung about you for several days. I am sure, quite sure, all this has its origin in some secret source of grief."

"My dear M. de Montbron, your penetration is so justly acknowledged that you may be fairly allowed to err for once in your judgment without its affecting your well-earned reputation; and certainly you are greatly mistaken in thinking me either sad or troubled with any secret sorrow; and if I durst venture to speak what I think without fear of being styled vain and conceited, I should say I have never looked more captivating than I do at this present moment."

"And yet such is not your real opinion, but put into your head by some false and perfidious whisperer. Is this flattering friend a female?"

"No," replied Adrienne, with a slight emotion, "it was my own heart, which never deceives me!" Then added, "Understand — if you can."

"Do you mean by that to imply that you rejoice in the difference your features present to what they did a few days ago, because you are proud of the internal suffering which preys upon you?" inquired M. de Montbron, examining Adrienne attentively. "In that case, then, I was right. You have some hidden grief. I am the more determined upon maintaining this assertion, because it affords me equal pain with yourself."

"Then, once for all, my kind friend, let me beseech you to banish such an idea from your mind, for it is impossible for any one to be more happy than myself. The simple thought that I am free — yes, at my age, wholly free and unfettered — is alone sufficient to preserve my beauty from fading or my spirits from failing."

"Yes, you are indeed free to torment yourself, — free to be wretched how and in what manner you think fit."

"Come, come, dear count," said Adrienne, "we shall

begin our old habit of disputing over again. I begin to find you out, and to set you down as the ally of my aunt and the Abbé d'Aigrigny."

"I? Yes, certainly; much after the fashion that the Republicans are the allies of the Legitimists, they affect to be on friendly terms the better to compass each other's destruction. But, apropos of your detestable aunt, I heard that for the last few days a sort of conclave has been held at her house, that considerable agitation has been evinced by the various members of it, — in fact, that it may be looked upon as a sort of peculiar commotion. Ah, your aunt is travelling a nice road!"

"What else can be expected from one whose life has presented such completely opposite tastes? There was a time when she was ambitious of enacting the part of the Goddess of Reason, now she seeks to be canonised as a saint. And wherefore should she not attain her wish, since she has well qualified herself to be admitted into the Saints' Calendar under the title of Ste. Magdalen?"

"Say what you will of her, my dear child, it can never be more severe than she deserves; however, though certainly for very opposite reasons, I always was of her opinion as regarded your fancy for living alone."

"I know you were."

"And because I wish to see you a thousand times more free in every respect than you are at this moment, I advise you, faithfully and conscientiously —"

"To marry!"

"To be sure I would; and in that case, your dear liberty, with all its consequences, would belong, not to Mlle. de Cardoville, but to Madame — whatever you please; for we should have found you an excellent husband, who would have been responsible for your independence."

"And pray," said Adrienne, smiling, "who would have been responsible for this contemptible husband?

And what woman would degrade herself so far as to accept a name, laughed at and ridiculed by all? Not I, certainly!" continued the fair speaker, a little agitated. "No, no, my dear count; I alone will be answerable for my actions, whether right or wrong, and to my name shall be affixed the praise or blame of my words and opinions, for it would be as impossible to cast dishonour on the name of another as it would be for me to bear that name, unless it were surrounded with universal respect and esteem. Now, as I can answer for my own determination, never, by word or thought, to sully the name I received from my ancestors, and cannot possibly undertake for my husband (had I one) being equally tenacious of the purity of his, why, I prefer to remain as I am, — Adrienne de Cardoville."

"No living creature ever indulged in such ideas!"

"You say so," answered Adrienne, smiling, "because I object to the sight of a poor young girl being tied for life to some disagreeable, selfish individual — to barter her youth, her smiles, her freshness, for the dull privilege of being called his better half — ah, the very notion makes me feel pettish! As well might a charming rose be obliged to become the better half of an ugly thistle! Come, come, dear count," said Adrienne, bursting into a laugh, "you must confess there is nothing very tempting in this conjugal metempsychosis!"

The false gaiety and feverish excitement of Adrienne contrasted so strikingly with the paleness and suffering depicted in her countenance, it was so easy to perceive that all these forced spirits were merely intended to drown some internal grief, that M. de Montbron found himself deeply touched by the melancholy sight. Still concealing his emotion, he appeared, for a short space, to be deeply reflecting, and mechanically took up one of the books recently purchased and cut open, by which Adrienne was surrounded. After casting a hasty glance over it, he said, while striving to dissimulate the painful

ideas awakened by the forced mirth of Mlle. de Cardoville:

"You terrible madcap! Well, let us have one more attempt to prove my case. Suppose, now, that I were only twenty years of age, and that you were to do me the honour of espousing me, you would then be styled Madame de Montbron, I suppose?"

"Perhaps I should."

"How do you mean perhaps? Why, if you were my wife, do you mean to say you would not bear my name?"

"My dear count," replied Adrienne, smiling sweetly, "cease to pursue a hypothesis which leaves me only regrets."

All at once M. de Montbron made a sudden start, and surveyed Mlle. de Cardoville with an expression of profound surprise. During his conversation with Adrienne the count had mechanically taken up the different volumes scattered about on the sofa on which they were both seated, and, with an equally natural action, had vaguely cast his eyes over their contents. The first book he opened bore for its title, "Modern History of India;" the second, "Travels in India;" the third, "Letters on India." More and more surprised, M. de Montbron continued his investigation, and found this Indian nomenclature followed up by the fourth volume, "Excursions in India;" the fifth, "Remembrances of India;" the sixth, "Notes of a Traveller to the East Indies."

From hence arose an astonishment so great, and for several reasons so profoundly agitating, that M. de Montbron found it impossible to conceal from the penetrating eyes of Mlle. de Cardoville how deeply it affected him.

Adrienne, however, having totally forgotten the presence of the accusing volumes by which she was surrounded, and instigated by an involuntary feeling of petulance, blushed somewhat in displeasure at the fixed gaze with which her companion seemed trying to read

her innermost thoughts; then, resuming the usual frankness of her manner, she, in her turn, looked steadily in the face of M. de Montbron, and said, in the most natural manner possible:

"My dear count, what have you found to astonish you so greatly?"

But, instead of a direct reply to her question, the count appeared even more absorbed and earnest than before. While still contemplating the fair girl, he murmured forth, as if speaking to himself:

"No, no; it cannot be — it is impossible! And yet —"

"Would there be any objection to my knowing the subject of your monologue, my dear count?" said Adrienne, with a merry laugh.

"I beg your pardon, my child; but, in truth, my surprise has been too much for me at seeing —"

"Seeing what, I pray?"

"Such evident marks of your all-absorbing interest in whatever appertains to India," said M. de Montbron, slowly pronouncing his words, and fixing a penetrating glance on the features of Adrienne as he uttered them.

"Well, and what do you infer from that?" inquired Adrienne, boldly.

"I infer nothing; but I am lost in conjectures as to the cause of this sudden passion for matters you have hitherto cared nothing for."

"Oh, you wonder I should have so geographical a taste, and probably think it too grave a study for one of my age! But then, you know, my dear count, one must have some pursuit for her leisure hours; and besides, since I have been aware of my relationship to the half civilised Indian who writes himself my cousin and a petty prince, I have felt some curiosity to obtain an idea of the fortunate land which gave birth to my interesting, though savage, protégé."

These latter words were spoken with a bitterness that

struck M. de Montbron forcibly; still, therefore, continuing attentively to watch the expression of Adrienne's features, he merely replied:

"You appear to express yourself somewhat severely as regards the prince."

"Not at all; I speak with the utmost indifference."

"And yet he is deserving of a very different sentiment."

"Probably," answered Adrienne, coldly; "but it must be from a person of very different ideas to my own."

"He is so wretched," said M. de Montbron, in a tone of unfeigned sympathy; "I saw him two days ago, and really it grieved me to the heart to witness his misery!"

"And what have I to do with his sufferings?" exclaimed Adrienne, in a voice of painful impatience, almost amounting to anger.

"I should wish you, at least, to pity the torments he endures," replied the count, with a serious manner.

"Pity, and from me!" exclaimed Adrienne, with a look of offended pride; then, repressing her emotion, she said, coldly, "You are jesting, no doubt, M. de Montbron, when you ask me to take an interest in the love-sick torments of your pet prince?"

These last words of Adrienne were pronounced with a manner so freezingly contemptuous, while her pale and painfully contracted features betrayed so bitter a pride, that M. de Montbron said, sorrowfully:

"It is then true — too true; and I have not been deceived, I, who fancied that, from long years of faithful friendship, I had some claims on your confidence, have been kept in the dark, while you have unbosomed yourself to another, — this, I must confess, pains me deeply — severely!"

"I do not understand you, M. de Montbron."

"It is useless," continued the count, carried away by the violence of his feelings, "to employ any further concealment. I see, but too plainly, that there is no hope

left for my poor boy, — you love another!" And, seeing Adrienne start, as if taken by surprise, he continued: "Yes, yes; it is evidently so; your paleness, your melancholy for several days past, your invincible indifference to all that concerns the prince, abundantly prove that you love —"

Offended at the manner in which the count assumed a knowledge of her heart, she replied, with proud dignity:

"You are doubtless aware, M. de Montbron, that a secret surprised is not a confidence, and I must further add that your language greatly astonishes me."

"But, my dear girl, if I use the sad privilege of experience, if I divine, if I venture openly to speak of the state of your heart, if I even go so far as to find fault with you for having bestowed your affections, it is because the life or death of that poor young prince, whom you know I love and cherish as fondly as though he were my son, is involved in the matter. No one can be acquainted with my interesting protégé without feeling the most tender concern in all that refers to him; and from my heart I wish it had been otherwise, as regards the state of your affections!"

"It would be strange, indeed," replied Adrienne, with increased coldness, mingled with bitter irony, "if the bestowal of my love (even admitting that my heart entertained such a feeling) should have so strange an influence on Prince Djalma. What can it import to him whom I love?" added she, with a sort of disdain that was almost painful to witness.

"What does it matter to him?" rejoined the astonished count. "My dearest child, you must permit me to say that 'tis you who indulge in jests far too cruel! Why, when the wretched youth, loving you with all the wild ardour of a first passion, has been driven by despair twice to seek in death a termination to the torments he has undergone on your account, you appear astonished

that the fact of your loving another should become with him a question of life or death."

"Does he, then, love me?" asked the trembling girl, in a tone and manner impossible to describe.

"Does he? Ay, better than a hundred lives. I can answer for it; I have witnessed it."

Adrienne appeared almost stupefied at these words; a bright rush of blood suffused her before so pale countenance, then, quickly receding, left her paler than before, while her pale lips trembled as though with words she sought in vain to speak; then, placing her hand against her heart, she appeared as though essaying to stay its throbbing.

Terrified at the rapid change in the features of Adrienne, as well as at her alarming agitation, M. de Montbron approached her hastily, saying, "For Heaven's sake, my child, what is the matter?"

But, instead of making any reply, she merely waved her hand, as though to allay his fears, and soon, indeed, the apprehensions of the count were set at rest, for the lovely countenance, which had been a few minutes before contracted by disdain, irony, and grief, appeared suddenly lit up by the softest, sweetest emotions; the sensations she experienced were so ineffably delicious that it seemed as though she were unwilling to break the blessed spell by pronouncing a single word; then suddenly came the distressing suggestion that she might still be under the influence of some illusion or deceit, and, addressing M. de Montbron, she exclaimed, in a voice of agony:

"But you — you are not deceiving me. 'Tis true he loves me — is it not? Oh, speak and say so!"

"What I tell you?"

"Yes, yes — that Prince Djalma —"

"Loves you to distraction. Alas, 'tis but too true!"

"No, no," cried Adrienne, with the most enchanting simplicity, "it cannot be too true!"

"How?" exclaimed the count.

"But this female?" inquired Adrienne, as though the very question scorched her lips.

"What female?"

"She who was the cause of all his suffering."

"My child, I know of no other than yourself!"

"I? Oh, say that again, — say it was I only who occasioned all the agony the prince endured!"

"My beloved child, have confidence in me when I assure you that the prince has never felt a sigh for any one but yourself, and never have I witnessed a more sincere or touching passion."

"'Tis then true — his heart has never loved another than myself? Oh, say I am right! Speak, dear friend!"

"You are, indeed; you, and you alone, are the object of his soul's idolatry."

"Yet I was told —"

"By whom?"

"By M. Rodin."

"That Djalma —"

"That two days after our meeting the prince had fallen desperately in love with another, and that other utterly unworthy of him."

"M. Rodin told you so?" cried M. de Montbron, as though struck with some sudden idea. "Why, he it was who plunged a dagger in the heart of Djalma, by telling him that you were passionately in love with another."

"I?"

"Which threw the unhappy prince into the state of despair I have described."

"And it was my distress at learning that Djalma's love was not for me that produced the grief and melancholy you observed in me."

"But it seems that you return his passion even as warmly as he loves you," exclaimed M. de Montbron, in a transport of joy.

"Oh, do I not!" responded Mlle. de Cardoville, clasping her hands in a paroxysm of delight.

Some gentle taps at the door here interrupted Adrienne.

"Some of the servants, doubtless," said the count; "strive to collect yourself."

"Come in," said Adrienne, in a voice that betrayed her deep emotion.

Florine appeared.

"What is it?" inquired her mistress.

"M. Rodin has just been, but, fearing to disturb you, madame, he would not come in, but left word he would return in half an hour; will it be agreeable to you to receive him?"

"Yes, yes," said the count, to Florine; "and though I should still be with your young lady, show him in all the same. Shall it not be so?" inquired M. de Montbron, of Adrienne.

"Certainly," replied the happy girl, a gleam of indignation sparkling in her eyes at the recollection of Rodin's perfidy.

"The old villain!" exclaimed M. de Montbron, "I always suspected his stiff, starched, hypocritical demeanour; but he is now unmasked."

Florine quitted the room, leaving her mistress alone with M. de Montbron.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LOVE.

Mlle. de Cardoville's countenance was quite altered. For the first time her beauty shone forth in all its lustre, until now veiled by indifference or depressed by grief. A dazzling sunbeam suddenly lighted it up.

The slight irritation caused by Rodin's perfidy had passed like an imperceptible shadow across the young maiden's brow. Of what import were now these falsehoods — these treacheries? Were they not now unveiled?

And for the future, what human power could come between herself and Djalma, now so sure of each other? Who would dare to struggle against these two beings, so resolute and strong in the irresistible potency of their youth, love, and liberty? Who would dare to follow them into that warm sphere in which they, so handsome, so happy, were about to be united in lasting love, protected and defended by their happiness, an armour that was proof against all attacks?

Florine had scarcely gone out than Adrienne approached M. de Montbron with a rapid step. She seemed taller as she advanced, light, triumphant, and glowing. She was, indeed, a divinity walking on the clouds.

"When shall I see him?"

This was her first word to M. de Montbron.

"Why, to-morrow; he must be prepared for so much

happiness. A sudden and unexpected joy may be too terrible to a disposition so ardent."

Adrienne remained for a moment pensive; then she said suddenly:

"To-morrow — yes — not before to-morrow; I have a superstitious feeling in my heart."

"What is it?"

"You shall know. He loves me. This word expresses, includes everything, — comprises all, is all; and I have a thousand questions on my lips in reference to him, still I will not ask one before to-morrow. No; because, by a revered fatality, to-morrow is a sacred anniversary. From now till then I shall live an age; but I can wait. Look here!"

Then making a sign to M. de Montbron, she led him towards the Indian Bacchus.

"What a strong likeness!" she observed to the count.

"In truth," he said, "it is strange."

"Strange?" replied Adrienne, smiling, — "strange that a hero — that a demigod — that an ideal of beauty should resemble Djalma?"

"How you love him!" said Montbron, deeply moved, and almost dazzled at the happiness which shone in Adrienne's countenance.

"I must have suffered a good deal; must I not?" she said, after a moment's silence.

"If I had not decided on coming here to-day without any assignable reason, what would have happened?"

"I do not know. I should have died, perhaps, for I am smitten here (and she put her hand upon her heart), incurably. But what would have been my death will now be my life."

"Horrible to think of!" said the count, with a shudder; "a passion concentrated like yours, and as proud as you are — "

"Yes, proud, but not disdainful; and thus on learning his love for another, and learning that the impression

which I believed I had made on him at our first meeting was instantly effaced, I had renounced all hope without being able to renounce my love; and instead of flying from my memory, I surrounded myself with all that could recall it. When happiness is lost, there is still a bitter joy in suffering from those we love."

"I can now understand your Indian library."

Adrienne, without any reply, went to the stand, whence she took one of the newly cut open books with an expression of joy and happiness.

"Yes, I am very proud. Look, read that! Read it aloud, I beg of you. I repeat, I can wait until to-morrow."

And with the tip of her beautiful finger she pointed out a passage to the count, in the book which she presented to him.

She then went and, as it were, concealed herself on her causeuse; and then, in an attitude profoundly attentive and listening, with her body leaning forwards, and her hands crossed on the cushion, her chin leaning on her hand, her large eyes fixed with a kind of admiration on the Indian Bacchus in front of her, she seemed in this impassioned depth of contemplation to prepare to listen to M. de Montbron's reading.

He, very much surprised, began, after having looked at Adrienne, who said to him, in the softest and sweetest tone possible, "And very slowly, I entreat of you."

M. de Montbron read the following extract from the journal of a traveller in India:

"'When I was in India, at Bombay, in 1829, they were talking in all English societies of a young hero, son of —'"

The count paused for a second at the barbarous pronunciation of the name of Djalma's father. Adrienne said, quickly, in a soft tone, "Son of Kadja-Sing."

"What a memory!" said the count, with a smile.

And he continued:

"'A young hero, son of Kadja-Sing, King of Mundi. On his return from a distant and bloody expedition in the mountains against this Indian king, Colonel Drake was full of enthusiasm and respect for this son of Kadja-Sing, called Djalma. Hardly out of boyhood, this young prince, in a deadly war, displayed such chivalric intrepidity, such a noble character, that they surnamed his father the Father of the Generous.'

"How very touching," said the count, "is the custom of thus recompensing the sire in giving him a surname glorious for the son — it is noble! But how singular that you should fall in with this book!" added the count, with surprise. "I can easily comprehend that it is enough to excite even the coldest brain."

"Oh, you will see — you will see!" said Adrienne.

The count continued reading:

"'Colonel Drake, one of the bravest and best soldiers in the British army, told me yesterday that, being dangerously wounded and taken prisoner by Prince Djalma, after a desperate resistance, he had been taken to the camp, which was in the village of —'"

Here the same hesitation came over the count at meeting with a name even more difficult than the former; and not willing to make the attempt even to pronounce it, he interrupted himself, and said to Adrienne:

"Ah, as for this, I must really give it up!"

"And yet it is very easy," replied Adrienne; and with inexpressible sweetness she pronounced the following name, which is, really, very soft, "In the village of Shumshabad."

"This is an infallible mnemonic process for remembering geographical names," said the count. And he continued:

"'Once arrived at the camp, Colonel Drake received the most kind hospitality, and Prince Djalma watched over him like a son. It was then that the colonel became acquainted with certain facts, which raised his

enthusiasm for Prince Djalma to the hightest pitch. He related to me the following circumstances:

"'In one of the battles the prince was attended by a young Indian, about twelve years of age, to whom he was tenderly attached, and who was his page, following him on horseback, bearing his spare weapons. This boy was idolised by his mother, who, at the moment when the expedition set out, had confided her boy to Prince Djalma, saying to him, with a stoicism worthy of antiquity, "Let him be your brother!" "He shall be my brother," was the prince's reply. In the midst of a sanguinary rout the child was severely wounded, and his horse was killed. The prince, at the peril of his life, and in spite of the hurry of a precipitate retreat, rescued him, took him up behind him and then dashed off; they were pursued, and their horse wounded, but still he struggled on to a clump of jungles, in the midst of which, after several vain efforts, he fell exhausted. The child was incapable of proceeding, and the prince, taking him up in his arms, plunged with him into the thickest of the jungle. The English came up and searched the thicket, but the two escaped. After walking for a day and a night with forced march, countermarches, stratagems, fatigues, and unheard-of perils, the prince, still carrying the child, one of whose legs was severely injured, reached the camp of his father, when he only said, "I promised his mother that he should be my brother, and I have acted as a brother."'

"It is admirable!" exclaimed the count.

"Continue, pray continue," said Adrienne, dropping a tear, without taking her eyes from the bas-relief which she continued to contemplate with increasing love.

The count read on:

"'Another time Prince Djalma, followed by two black slaves, went before sunrise to a very wild spot to carry off two small tigers only a few days old. The den had been marked, the tiger and his mate were absent in search of food. One of the blacks entered the den by a

narrow opening, the other, with Djalma's aid, cut down with an axe a large trunk of a tree, in order to form a snare to take the tiger or his mate. On this side of the mouth the cave was almost perpendicular. The prince climbed up with agility, in order to lay the snare, with the help of the other black, when suddenly a frightful roaring was heard, and in half a dozen bounds the female, returning from her quest, reached the aperture of the den. The black who was laying the snare with the prince had his skull laid open by a bite; the tree fell across the narrow entrance of the cave, preventing the dam from entering, and at the same time barring the egress of the black, who was running out with the little cubs. Above, about twenty feet higher, on a platform formed by rocks, the prince, lying on his stomach, saw the fearful spectacle. The tigress, rendered furious by the cries of her young, was gnawing the black's hands, who, from the inside of the den, was endeavouring to keep hold of the trunk of the tree, which was his sole rampart, and was uttering dreadful cries.'

"It is horrible, indeed!" said the count.

"Oh, go on — go on!" exclaimed Adrienne, with excitement; "you will see what the heroism of goodness can do."

The count proceeded:

"'Suddenly the prince took his poniard between his teeth, tied his waist-belt to a point of the rock, took his hatchet in his hand, and with the other descended by the scarf, and alighted some paces from her, and, rapid as lightning, gave her two deadly stabs at the moment when the black, losing his strength, had let go the tree, and must have been torn to pieces.'"

"And you are astonished at the resemblance with this demigod, to whom even fable does not assign a devotion equally generous!" exclaimed the young girl, with increasing excitement.

"I am no longer surprised — I admire," said the count,

with a voice of emotion; "and at these two noble traits my heart beats with enthusiasm as if I were but twenty years old."

"And the noble heart of this traveller beats like yours at the recital," said Adrienne, "as you will see."

"'What makes the intrepidity of the prince the more admirable is, that, according to the principles of the Indian castes, a slave's life is of no importance. Thus a king's son, risking his life to preserve a poor creature so low in estimation, obeyed a heroic instinct of charity that was truly Christian, and hitherto unheard of in this country. Two such traits, as Colonel Drake very justly observed, are enough to depict the man, and it is with a sentiment of deep respect and extreme admiration, I, an unknown traveller, have written Prince Djalma's name in my book of travels, experiencing at the same time a sort of sorrow, when I ask myself what will be the future fate of this prince, lost in the depths of this wild country, now wholly devastated by war. How humble soever may be the tribute I pay to a character worthy of the heroic times, his name, at least, shall be repeated with generous enthusiasm by all hearts that can sympathise with what is generous and great.'"

"When I read these lines, so simple and so touching," replied Adrienne, "I could not help carrying the book to my lips."

"Yes, he is all I thought him," said the count, more and more moved, and returning the book to Adrienne, who rose gravely, and, also much affected, said to him:

"He is such as I would have you know him, in order that you may appreciate my adoration for him; for this courage, this heroic goodness, I had guessed from a conversation which I overheard, in spite of myself, before I appeared in his apartment. From that time I knew him to be as generous as he was brave, as tender, as exquisitely sensitive, as energetic and resolute; but when I saw him so gloriously handsome, and so different, by the noble

expression of his countenance, and even in his attire, from all I had ever before met with, — when I saw the impression which I made upon him, and which, perhaps, I experienced even more powerfully, I felt my life itself was bound up in this love."

"And what are now your plans?"

"Divine — as radiant as my heart. When he learns his happiness, I wish Djalma to experience the same bewilderment as I am smitten with, and which will not allow me yet to look my sun in the face — for I repeat to you, from hence till to-morrow will be an age to live! Yes, strange as it may appear, I had believed, after such a revelation, that I should have felt the want of remaining alone plunged in an ocean of overwhelming thoughts. But no, no; from now till to-morrow I dread my solitude; I feel an indescribable, feverish, disturbed, burning impatience! Oh, blessed be the fairy who, touching me with her wand, will put me to sleep from now till to-morrow!"

"I will be that benevolent fairy," said the count, smiling.

"You?"

"I."

"And in what way?"

"Behold the power of my wand. I wish to distract you from a portion of your thoughts, by making them materially visible to you."

"Pray thee explain."

"And moreover, my plan will have an additional advantage. Hear me; you are so happy, that you can listen to anything. Your odious aunt and her odious friends give out that your residence with Doctor Baleinier — "

"Was rendered necessary from my weakness of mind," said Adrienne, with a smile. "I expected that."

"Stupid as it is. But as your resolution to live alone creates for you those who envy and hate you, you know

wherefore there will not be wanting persons fully disposed to credit all that is said, however stupid."

"I hope so. To be taken for mad by fools is very flattering."

"Yes; but to prove to fools that they are fools, and that in the face of all Paris, is very amusing; and they are beginning to be uneasy at not seeing you. You have discontinued your usual drives out; my niece has been alone for a long time in our box at the Italian theatre. You wish to destroy, consume time until to-morrow, and now there is an excellent opportunity. It is two o'clock — at half past three my niece will call here in her carriage; it is a lovely day, and the Bois de Bologne will be crowded. You will have a delightful ride, and see all the world; then the air and locomotion will calm your fevered happiness, and this evening (now my magic begins) I will take you to India —"

"To India?"

"In the midst of one of those wild forests wherein we hear lions, panthers, and tigers roar. The heroic combat which just now so much excited you shall pass, fierce and terrible, beneath your eyes."

"Really, my dear count, this is a very pleasant jest."

"Not at all. I promise to show you real wild beasts, the redoubtable dwellers in the land of your demigod — growling tigers — roaring lions. Is not that better than your books?"

"But really —"

"Come, I see I must let you into the secret of my supernatural power. On your return from your drive, you shall dine with my niece, and we will go afterwards to see a very singular spectacle at the Porte St. Martin. A most wonderful tamer of wild beasts there exhibits animals perfectly ferocious in the midst of a forest (now the illusion begins), and feigns with them, tigers, lions, and panthers, the most desperate combats. All Paris

runs after these representations, and all Paris will see you there, more lovely, more charming than ever."

"Agreed, agreed," said Adrienne, with childish delight. "Yes, you are right; I shall experience a singular pleasure in seeing these fierce monsters, who will remind me of those my demigod so heroically fought. I agree, moreover, because for the first time in my life I ardently desire to be thought very handsome by all the world. I agree because — "

Mlle. de Cardoville was interrupted by a slight tap at the door, and then Florine entered to announce M. Rodin.

CHAPTER XXX.

EXECUTION.

Rodin entered. A rapid glance cast on Mlle. de Cardoville and M. de Montbron at once convinced him that he was in a difficult position. In truth, nothing could be less satisfactory to him than the looks of Adrienne and the count.

The latter, when he did not like a person, manifested, as we have already said, his antipathy by certain modes of aggressive impertinences, which had been, by the way, answered for and maintained in several duels; and now, at the sight of Rodin, his features suddenly assumed a contemptuous and harsh expression, and leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece as he conversed with Adrienne, he turned his head haughtily over his shoulder without taking any notice of the low bow of the Jesuit.

At the sight of this man, Mlle. de Cardoville felt herself almost surprised at not experiencing any feeling of irritation or hatred. The brilliant flame which was kindled in her bosom purified her heart from all feelings of vengeance. She smiled, on the contrary, for, casting a proud but tender look on the Indian Bacchus, and then at herself, she asked herself whether two beings so young, so handsome, so free, and so fond, could have, at this moment, anything to fear from this dirty old man, with mean and servile air, who approached her so crawlingly, like a wriggling reptile. In fact, far from feeling anger with or aversion to Rodin, the young lady experienced

only an increase of gay raillery, and her large eyes, already bright with bliss, now sparkled with malicious irony.

Rodin felt very ill at ease. The persons of his gown infinitely prefer violent enemies to mocking adversaries, sometimes escaping the ire loosened against them by falling on their knees, weeping, and groaning, and beating the breast, and sometimes, on the other hand, braving them audaciously, and showing an armed and implacable front; but before the biting satire they are soon disconcerted, and so was Rodin at this moment, who felt that, placed between Adrienne de Cardoville and M. de Montbron, he was about to pass what is vulgarly termed a rather uncomfortable quarter of an hour.

The count opened the fire, and looking over his shoulder, he said to Rodin:

"Ah — ah, here you are, Mr. Benevolence!"

"Come nearer, sir; come nearer, sir," said Adrienne, with a satirical smile, — "you, the pearl of friends, the model of philosophers — you, the declared foe of all roguery, all falsehood, I have a thousand compliments prepared for you."

"I accept everything from you, my dear young lady, even unmerited compliments," said the Jesuit, forcing a smile, and exposing thereby his horrid yellow and carious teeth; "but may I inquire how I have deserved these compliments?"

"Your penetration is usually very keen, sir," replied Adrienne.

"And I, sir," said the count, "I pay homage to your veracity, not less evident, or, perhaps, too evident."

"I penetrating — and in what, my dear young lady?" asked Rodin, with composure. "I veracious, and in what, Monsieur le Comte?" he added, turning around to M. de Montbron.

"In what, sir?" said Adrienne; "why, you have guessed a secret surrounded by difficulties and mysteries

without number, — in a word, you have contrived to read the very bottom of a woman's heart."

"I, my dear young lady?"

"You, sir, and you have cause to rejoice, — your penetration has produced the most happy results."

"And your veracity effected wonders," added the count.

"It is pleasant to the heart to act well even without knowing it," said Rodin, still keeping on the defensive, and looking askance at the count and Adrienne in turns; "but may I know for what I am now commended?"

"Gratitude compels me to inform you, sir," said Adrienne, satirically, "you have discovered, and disclosed to Prince Djalma, that I am passionately in love with some one. Well, laud your penetration — it is true!"

"You have discovered, and disclosed to mademoiselle, that the Prince Djalma was passionately in love with some one. Well, laud your veracity, my dear sir — it is true!"

Rodin was thunderstruck and silent.

"The some one whom I loved so passionately," said Adrienne, "is the prince."

"The some one whom the prince loves so passionately," added the count, "is mademoiselle."

These disclosures, so seriously disquieting, and made so unexpectedly, overwhelmed Rodin, who stood mute and alarmed as he reflected on the future.

"Can you now comprehend our gratitude towards you, sir?" said Adrienne, in a tone still more ironical. "Thanks to your sagacity, thanks to the deep interest you bear us, we, the prince and I, are indebted to you for being enlightened in our mutual sentiments towards each other."

The Jesuit resumed his *sang-froid*, and his assumed composure greatly annoyed M. de Montbron, who, but for Adrienne's presence, would have given quite another turn to the proceeding.

"There is some error," said Rodin, "in what you, my dear young lady, have done me the honour to communicate to me. Never in my life have I said a word in reference to the most suitable and, in every way, proper sentiment you entertain for Prince Djalma."

"Most true," interposed Adrienne; "and by a scruple of most exquisite discretion, when you were speaking to me of the intense love which the Prince Djalma experienced, you carried your reserve, your delicacy, to such a pitch, as to say that it was not me whom he loved."

"And the same scruple made you say to the prince that Mlle. de Cardoville was in love with some one, and that some one was not him."

"M. le Comte," said Rodin, dryly, "I have no occasion to tell you that I feel no particular inclination for mixing myself up in love-affairs."

"Really, what modesty or self-love!" said the count, rudely. "For your interest's sake, I pray you do not avow any such bad taste, for it might injure you if it were made public. You must, assuredly, be more careful with regard to the other small occupations you no doubt attend to."

"There is one, sir, at least," said Rodin, becoming as insulting as M. de Montbron himself, "for whose rude apprenticeship I am indebted to you, M. le Comte, and that is the onerous occupation of being your auditor."

"Ah, dear sir," retorted the count, disdainfully, "were you not aware that there are many ways of chastising rogues and impertinent fellows?"

"My dear count!" said Adrienne to M. de Montbron, in a tone of reproach.

Rodin replied with the utmost composure:

"I really do not see, M. le Comte, *primo*, that there is much courage in threatening and calling impertinent a poor old fellow like myself; *secundo* —"

"M. Rodin," said the count, interrupting the Jesuit,

"*primo*, a poor old fellow like you, who behaves shamefully, and then ensconces himself behind the old age which he dishonours, is at once a coward and a scoundrel, and deserves a double chastisement. *Secundo*, as to age, I do not know that hunters and *gens-d'armes* bow with any respect before the gray hides of old wolves, or the gray hairs of old knaves, — what think you, *cher monsieur?*"

Rodin, still unmoved, elevated his shrivelled eyelid, fixed for a moment his little reptile eye upon the count, darted at him a glance as chill and sharp as a dart, then the livid lid again fell in the dull eyeball of the corpse-faced old man.

"Not being an old wolf, and still less an old knave," replied Rodin, quietly, "you will allow me, M. le Comte, not to disturb myself unnecessarily as to the pursuits of wolf-hunters or *gens-d'armes;* as to the reproaches made to me, I have a very simple mode of reply, I do not say justification, for I never justify myself."

"Indeed!" said the count.

"Never!" replied Rodin, with perfect coolness; "my actions must do that for me. I shall therefore simply reply, that seeing the deep, violent, and really fearful impression caused on the prince by mademoiselle —"

"Let the assurance you now give me of the prince's love," said Adrienne, with an enchanting smile, and interrupting Rodin, "absolve you of the ill you sought to do me. The sight of our coming happiness shall be your sole punishment."

"It may chance that I have neither need of absolution nor of punishment, for, as I have had the honour to observe, my dear young lady, the future will justify my acts. Yes, I thought it right to say to the prince that you loved another person, and that person not himself, as I thought it also right to tell you that the prince loved another person, and that person was not yourself; and I believed, and believe, I was acting for your

mutual interest. My attachment to you may have misled me, possibly so; but after my past conduct to you, my dear young lady, I think I have a right to feel surprised at being thus treated. This is not a complaint; for if I never justify myself, still less do I ever complain."

"*Parbleu!* you grow heroic, my dear sir!" said the count. "You neither deign to complain, nor justify the ill you do."

"The ill I do?" and Rodin fixed his eyes steadfastly on the count. "Are we playing at riddles to-day?"

"What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed the count, with great indignation; "and what do you call it, when, by your falsehoods, you have plunged the prince into such fearful despair that he has twice attempted his life? What do you call it, when, by your falsehoods, you threw mademoiselle into so cruel and entire a mistake, that, but for the resolution I have taken to-day, this error would still have existed, and might have had the most fatal results?"

"And will you do me the honour, M. le Comte, to tell me what interest have I in these despairs, these errors, admitting for a moment that I have caused them?"

"A deep interest, unquestionably," said the count, sternly; "and the more dangerous, inasmuch as it is concealed; for you are of that number, I easily perceive, to whom the misfortunes and injuries of others bring both pleasure and profit."

"That would be too much, M. le Comte. I would content myself with the profit," said Rodin, with a bow.

"Your insolent coolness does not deceive me. This becomes very serious," continued the count; "it is unlikely that this perfidy is a solitary act. Who knows if this be not also one of the effects of Madame de Saint-Dizier's hatred to Mlle. de Cardoville?"

Adrienne had listened to this discussion with deep attention. Suddenly she started as if enlightened by a sudden revelation.

After a moment's silence, she said to Rodin, without severity, without anger, but with calmness, full of softness and serenity:

"They say, sir, that happy love effects prodigies. I should be inclined to believe it, for after some minutes' reflection, during which I have recalled certain circumstances, your whole conduct appears to me under a fresh aspect."

"What may be this new perspective, my dear young lady?"

"That you may have my view of the case, sir, allow me to recall a few facts. La Mayeux was utterly devoted to me, and had given me undeniable proofs of her attachment; her mind was worthy of her noble heart, but she felt towards you an invincible antipathy. All at once she disappears mysteriously from my house, and it has not been your fault that I have not entertained the most hateful suspicions of her. M. de Montbron has a paternal affection for me, but, I must own, very little sympathy towards you, and you have endeavoured to create a coolness between us. Then the Prince Djalma experiences a deep feeling for me, and you employ the most treacherous deceit to destroy that sentiment — what is your motive? I do not, cannot divine; but I am persuaded it is inimical to me."

"It would seem, mademoiselle," said Rodin, sternly, "that you add the forgetfulness of services rendered to your inability to explain my conduct."

"I will not deny, sir, that you released me from M. Baleinier's house; but then, in fact, in a few days more I should most certainly have been freed by M. de Montbron."

"You are right, my dear girl," said the count; "it is more than probable that he desired to acquire the merit

of what must soon have inevitably accrued, thanks to your best of friends."

"You were drowning, I save you — you are grateful to me? a mistake!" said Rodin, bitterly; "another passer-by would, doubtless, have saved you at a later period."

"The comparison is hardly correct," said Adrienne, with a smile; "a *maison de santé* is not a river; and, although I now think you, sir, a very likely person to swim between two streams, swimming was useless in this instance, and you only opened a door to me which must infallibly have been opened very soon."

"Capital, my dear child!" said the count, laughing heartily at Adrienne's reply.

"I know, sir, that your remarkable attentions are not confined to me alone. Marshal Simon's daughters were brought back to him by you, but who could credit that the researches and claims of the maréchal, Duc de Ligny, after his children, would have been in vain? You went so far as to restore to an old soldier his imperial cross, a real relic most sacred in his eyes, and it was a touching sight. You did, too, unmask the Abbé d'Aigrigny and M. Baleinier, but I had resolved on unmasking them myself; still, all this conspires to prove that you, sir, are a man of infinite ability."

"Ah, mademoiselle!" said Rodin, humbly.

"Full of resource and invention."

"Ah, mademoiselle!"

"And it is not my fault if, in our long conversation at M. Baleinier's, you evinced that superior mind which impressed me. Yes, I confess it, deeply impressed me, and which seems at this moment somewhat embarrassed. Ah, sir, it is very difficult for an uncommon mind like yours to keep its *incognito*. Still, as it is possible that by different paths — oh, very different!" added the young lady, with emphasis — "we are tending to the same end (according to our memorable conversation at M.

Baleinier's), I wish for the sake of our future communion (as you phrased it) to give you some advice, and to speak unreservedly to you."

Rodin had listened to Mlle. de Cardoville apparently unmoved, with his hat under his arm, his hands folded beneath his waistcoat, and twiddling his thumbs. The only exterior sign of the internal dismay he experienced at the calm language of Adrienne was that the livid eyelids of the Jesuit, hypocritically bent towards the ground, became more and more red, so violently did the blood suffuse them. Yet he replied to Mlle. de Cardoville, in a firm voice, and bowing profoundly:

"Good advice and frank language are always excellent things."

"Learn, sir," resumed Adrienne, with slight excitement, "that happy love gives such penetration, such energy, such courage, that perils are laughed at, snares detected, hatreds braved. Believe me, the divine light which beams around two loving hearts suffices to dissipate all darkness, to discover all stratagems. Mark me, in India — excuse my weakness, I love to talk of India," added the young maiden, with inexpressible grace and delicacy of manner — "in India, the travellers, in order to ensure their tranquillity during the night, light up a large fire around their ajoupa (excuse, also, this tinge of local colouring), and as far as the luminous beams extend, they drive away, by their brilliancy alone, all impure and venomous reptiles, whom the light startles, because they only exist in darkness."

"The application of the comparison does not yet appear to me," said Rodin, still twiddling his thumbs, and half raising his eyelids, still more and more suffused.

"I will speak more plainly," said Adrienne, smiling. "Suppose, sir, that the last service that you have rendered the prince and myself — for you only rely on services rendered — is very new and very skilful, I acknowledge it."

"Bravo, my dear child!" said the count, joyfully; "the execution will be complete."

"Oh, it is an execution, is it?" said Rodin, still not visibly moved.

"No, sir," replied Adrienne, smiling, "it is only a conversation between a simple young girl and an old philosopher — the friend of good. Suppose, then, that the many services you have rendered me and mine have suddenly opened my eyes, or rather," added the young lady, in a serious tone, "suppose that God, who gives a mother the instinct to defend her child, has given me, with my happiness, the instinct to preserve that happiness, and that some indefinable presentiment, now lighting up a thousand circumstances until now obscure, has suddenly revealed to me that, instead of being my friend, you are, perhaps, the most dangerous enemy of me and my family."

"So then we pass from execution to suppositions," said Rodin, as imperturbable as ever.

"And from supposition, sir, if it must be said, to certainty," replied Adrienne, with noble and calm dignity. "Yes, now I believe I have been for some time your dupe, and I say it, sir, without hatred or anger, but with regret. It is painful to see a man of your understanding, your mind, stoop to such machinations, and, after having set all the diabolical springs to work, to gain nothing but ridicule; for can anything be more ridiculous than for a man like you to be thwarted by a young girl, who has for her arms, her defence, her light — nothing but her love? In a word, sir, from this day forth, I consider you as an implacable and dangerous enemy, for I now perceive your aim, though I cannot divine the means by which you seek to attain it; but no doubt they will be worthy of the past. Well, in spite of all that, I do not fear you. From to-morrow, my family will be informed of all, and an active, unbroken, and resolved union will keep us all on our guard, for

unquestionably it concerns this enormous inheritance which has been so nearly snatched from us. Now what relations can exist between the wrongs with which I reproach you and the pecuniary gain which is hoped for? I am utterly ignorant of this; but you told me, yourself, that my enemies were so dangerously skilled, and their plots so crafty, that I must expect everything — foresee everything; I well recollect that instruction — I promised you to be frank, sir, and I believe I have kept my word."

"Frankness, supposing I were your enemy, would be most imprudent," said Rodin, still impassive; "but you also promised me some advice, my dear young lady."

"The advice shall be brief, — do not contend with me, because there is, and you know it, something even more powerful than you and yours; it is a woman who is defending her happiness."

Adrienne pronounced these last words with such sovereign confidence, her lovely face was radiant with such emboldened happiness, that Rodin, despite his phlegmatic audacity, was a moment dismayed. However, he betrayed no alarm, but after a moment's silence he said, with an air of pity that was almost disdainful:

"My dear young lady, we shall never meet again, in all human probability; but remember one thing which I repeat to you, — I never justify myself; I leave that to the future. Yes, my dear young lady, I am, in spite of everything, your most devoted servant," and he bowed humbly. "M. le Comte, my respectful duty to you," he added, bowing even lower to the Comte de Montbron, and then he left the room.

Scarcely was Rodin gone, than Adrienne ran to her desk, wrote a few words in haste, which she sealed and handed to M. de Montbron.

"I shall not see the prince before to-morrow, as much from superstition of heart as because it is necessary for my plans that this interview be attended with some cere-

mony. You shall know all; but I will write to him instantly, for, with such an enemy as M. Rodin, we must foresee everything."

"You are right, my dear child. The letter — quickly."

Adrienne gave it to him.

"I tell him enough to calm his grief, and not enough to deprive me of the delight and joy of the surprise I have in store for him to-morrow."

"This is all rational and affectionate, and I will hasten to the prince with your note. I shall not see him, for I could not answer for myself. But our ride and the play this evening, I suppose, are decided on?"

"Certainly; I feel quite a want of some relaxation till to-morrow. Then I feel the open air will do me good, for my conversation with M. Rodin has somewhat excited me."

"The old rascal! but we will talk of him by and by. I am off to the prince, and will return with Madame de Morinval, to accompany you to the Champs Elysées."

And the count hastily departed, as joyful now as he was unhappy and distressed when he entered the house.

END OF VOLUME IV.